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Student dialogue journal documentation of learning from A cultural thematic unit taught in Spanish

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the value of a thematic unit taught in Spanish can be measured through student dialogue journals written in English. The question is: Can student dialogue journals document their learning from *Fiestas de Yucatán,* a cultural thematic unit written by the author and taught in Spanish. The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning were used to measure the value of the unit as documented through the student dialogue journals. The research, conducted with two classes of second grade students, analyzed qualitatively the student journal entries for evidence of learning about the standard for the goals of Cultures and Connections. Students wrote and illustrated in a journal with open-ended questions after each lesson from the thematic unit. Parental input on their child's learning was gathered through an open-ended parent questionnaire after the journals were shared at home. Focus groups were conducted with one group of participating journal teachers and one group of non-participating journal teachers, all of whom were familiar the *Fiestas de Yucatán* thematic unit. The researcher used content analysis as the primary means of analyzing data for evidence of student learning. Evidence of learning was documented from student's written entries or from their illustrations that accompanied each entry in the journal. The results suggest that the dialogue journal is an effective alternative assessment tool for early second language learners and that the journals give ample evidence of learning the goals of Cultures and Connections of the National Foreign Language Standards. The appendices contain the student journal questions, examples of student journal entries, and matrices for analysis of student journals, teacher focus groups, and parent questionnaires.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background

As an elementary school teacher of Spanish, the author has had the opportunity during the past five years to collaborate with second grade classroom teachers to have students write a dialogue journal about their Spanish class experiences. A dialogue journal is a written conversation in which two people communicate regularly over a period of time (Stanton, 1980). Through this collaboration with second grade teachers, the author has realized that student dialogue journals can document verbally and, in some cases with drawings, the value of an elementary foreign language program and specifically the value of a curriculum unit. This study answers the following question: *Can student dialogue journals provide documentation of student learning from a cultural unit taught in Spanish?*

A number of background elements of this study are important to recognize. The second grade Spanish curriculum unit, entitled *Fiestas de Yucatán*, that the author developed for an elementary foreign language program, was greatly influenced by several experiences of the author between 1995 and 1998 (Borich, 1997). In 1995 she received a grant from the *Fundación Cultural de Yucatán* for three weeks of travel and study to Yucatán. The purpose of her visit was to learn more about Yucatán's cultural celebrations, and, upon her return home, to refine a curriculum unit that would provide students real-life cultural experiences while learning Spanish.

In 1996, with the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, five curricular areas were set forth as goals for foreign language education—Communication,

Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities (National Standards, 1996). Development of the Standards enhanced refinement of the *Fiestas de Yucatán* unit. While the unit provides some experiences for children in each of the five goal areas, two of the goals, in particular, are emphasized—Cultures and Connections. The goal "Cultures" requires that students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied, and between the products and perspectives of the culture studied. The goal "Connections" requires that students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

No student assessment activities had yet been written for the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum. In order to gain experience in how to develop and implement student assessments, the author attended the Performance Assessment Institute of the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University in the summers of 1997 and 1998. These institutes enhanced the author's awareness of, and interest in, all types of assessments, particularly alternative assessments such as self-assessment, journals, and portfolios. The institutes required that participants formulate an action plan to assist in implementing what they had learned. The author's plan included formulating a dialogue journal activity and a home assessment project as two possible alternative assessments to accompany the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum.

In the district where the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum is implemented, students receive instruction in Spanish in grades 1-5 for fifteen minutes once every three days. Each year during the second semester, they continue classes in this same pattern but receive instruction in French. Because of the exploratory nature of the program, neither

traditional nor alternative assessments had been used to assess children's progress in language learning nor their attitudes toward other languages and cultures. Therefore, it was impossible to verify the progress of the students and the benefits of the program. The alternative assessments that the author pilot tested would be the first formal attempt the author had made to assess her students' learning of the Yucatán curriculum.

Rationale

Assessment in Foreign Language Today

Foreign language instruction in the United States is in a state of change. The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) confirm that there is consensus today that the emphasis on learning the language system and the belief that only certain "gifted" individuals can learn languages has changed. Not so long ago, the majority of second language learners were students who were college-bound. Now, however, the profession recognizes that all students, not just the college bound, need the opportunity to learn another language and explore other cultures because they live in a world that values telecommunications, market competitiveness, and international living. We now recognize the importance of learning other languages and knowing about other cultures.

Since the 1980s the focus and purpose of language learning has become the development of students' foreign language proficiency through meaningful communicative and interactive activities (Rhodes, Rosenbusch, & Thompson, 1997). The standards also clarify that learning languages goes beyond the practical benefits of communication. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking skills, compare

language systems, and learn how languages influence each other. In doing so, they learn how different cultures express ideas.

A survey by American Council for Teaching Foreign Languages in 1994 reported that most high school programs today do not provide the foundations needed for a goal of proficiency in a target language (Schulz, 1998). Of the 869,271 students who took first-year Spanish in ninth grade, only 74,684 (8.6 percent) were still taking that language four years later. Proficiency is difficult to attain in high school programs because of the high attrition rate for students studying language in grades 9-12 (Draper & Hicks, 1996).

To achieve higher levels of proficiency, a longer sequence of instruction is needed. A recent survey by the Center for Applied Linguistics (Rhodes & Brannaman, 1998) reports a nearly 10 percent increase in the number of elementary schools offering foreign language programs since 1987. In terms of proficiency, however, the vast majority of these programs appear to offer only an introductory exposure to languages.

Recently, in all fields of education, teachers have put greater emphasis on measuring the processes of learning and teaching as well as the products (Rhodes, et. al., 1997). This national interest in alternative assessment in combination with the foreign language proficiency movement has resulted in changes in assessment techniques used in foreign language classes. Because of recent interest in proficiency teaching and testing, alternatives to discrete point and standardized tests have become more common (Rhodes, et.al, 1997).

Rennie discusses the relationship that exists between assessment and instruction; each influences and must interact with the other (1998). Rennie explains that in the past

decade changes in assessment practices for the foreign language classroom have occurred because of initiatives at the national and local levels. At the national level, guidelines for evaluating proficiency have been developed for grades K-12. Locally, teachers have been discovering the uses of alternative assessment techniques. However, Rosenbusch (1995) surveyed assessment practices of middle and high school teachers at a technology institute. That report reveals that teachers indicated a lack of knowledge in how to go about changing assessment practices as their teaching practices became more communicative. According to Rhodes, et.al. (1997), "teachers...need opportunities to learn how to develop forms of performance assessment that reflect the new [teaching] strategies and the evolving curricular content" (p. 413).

Assessment in Elementary Foreign Language Programs

The national survey by Rhodes and Brannaman (1998) asked how students' language is assessed in the elementary programs currently in existence. The respondents, who were principals of both public and private schools, indicated that a wide variety of assessment strategies are used for assessing language proficiency. Seventy-seven percent said students took selected response (multiple choice or matching) or short answer tests. Slightly fewer noted that students engaged in authentic activities such as demonstrations and oral proficiency interviews (70% and 67% respectively). Fifty-eight percent used translation exercises, 47% used student portfolios, and 31% relied on student self-assessments. Fewer respondents said a variety of other strategies were used (e.g. memory/recitation, informal assessment, or specific formal assessments). Others stated

(no per cent given) there was no assessment in place or that it was in the process of evolving as the program was being developed.

Curtain and Pesola suggest a number of reasons for why assessment has a low priority in elementary foreign language programs or why there is no assessment at all (1994). As stated earlier, the majority of elementary programs are of the type in which students gain little or no proficiency in the target language. Large numbers of students and very short amounts of instructional time are major roadblocks to implementation of appropriate assessment. The danger inherent in little or no assessment is that children and their parents will not consider the elementary foreign language program to be important. "Any tendency to regard the foreign language class as an 'extra,' or as a subject area of less than equal status with the rest of the curriculum, is reinforced by the absence of regular, careful student assessment and reporting" (Curtain & Pesola, 1994, p. 221).

However, very little information is available to elementary school foreign language teachers on how to assess students in the lower grades (Thompson, 1995). Because elementary teachers tend to use communicative and interactive strategies with their students, they may have an easier transition to performance or alternative assessment than high school teachers. This tendency to be more communicative and interactive with their students enhances the transition to alternative assessment once the teacher realizes "that an assessment needs to reflect the content and approach used in the classroom" (L. Thompson, personal communication, July 17, 1999). While the use of alternative assessment by elementary and secondary schools is growing, such assessment

differs widely among districts and even among teachers within the same district. Authentic assessment for elementary and secondary foreign language programs must show what students can do, just as the standards suggest in defining "what students should know and are able to do" in grades 4, 8, and 12 (National Standards, 1996).

Why Qualitative Research for this Project?

The mode of inquiry for this study, qualitative, is an effective approach for a number of reasons. This research has been carried out in a unique educational setting where the program is of an exploratory nature (short classes that meet every three days). Since very little has been done in the way of documenting learning in a second language through dialogue journals (other than studies of English as a second language students), it is important to consider various perspectives—the foreign language teacher's view as an insider, the regular classroom teacher's view as an observer, and, most importantly, the students' view as receptor of the learning. These perspectives would be difficult to measure quantitatively. Furthermore, any quantitative measure by itself would not tell a very complete story of the learning experienced by both students and teachers involved in this unique setting.

The data here will be of a reality that is socially constructed. The author will attempt to "interpret how the various participants in this social setting construct the world around them" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6). In addition, the author's role as participant in the research creates a partiality that is not appropriate to quantitative research (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Because of this, these results will not be generalizable to all settings. Instead, the purpose of this study is to interpret the findings and attempt to understand

from the participants' points of view why certain patterns can be seen from the data obtained. Glesne and Peshkin tell us that "qualitative researchers immerse themselves in the setting..., and they use multiple means to gather data" (p. 7). Eisner contrasts qualitative and quantitative in this way: quantitative research reduces data to numerical relationships...with findings presented in a formal fashion while reports of qualitative research "exploit the power of form to inform" (Eisner, 1991, p. 7).

From Research Proposal to Data Collection

In a pilot study of dialogue journals use, the researcher learned a great deal about how her students felt about what they were learning in their Spanish classes. A dialogue journal is a written, on-going interaction between individual students and their teacher contained in a bound notebook. In the pilot study, two classes of second graders wrote dialogue journals to the researcher about their Spanish class experiences. In continuing study of this alternative assessment tool beyond the pilot study, the researcher wanted to be able to document the learning that was occurring in a curriculum taught primarily in Spanish that focuses on culture and that makes connections with other content areas.

The primary source of data in this study is the student journals. However, two additional means have been used to verify what the researcher has observed in reading, interpreting, and summarizing the data of those student journals. Two separate focus groups of second grade teachers were conducted. The first group included teachers who had participated in this study or in the pilot studies by using the dialogue journals with their students. The second group included teachers who had not. All teachers were somewhat familiar with the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum that was taught for this study

because that thematic unit forms the basis of the second grade Spanish curriculum. During the focus groups, the teachers were asked questions that allowed them to contribute their observations and perspectives on student learning of the target culture and connections with other content areas. Additionally, parental input and observations of student learning were obtained through parent questionnaires after students shared their journals at home.

Student journals were used with two elementary school Spanish classes during the fall semester of 1999. Throughout the time she was responding to the students' journals, the researcher kept her own journal regarding observations she made of the student entries. Next, transcriptions of the focus groups and parent questionnaires were read and re-read to compare observations made by those groups. Preliminary stages of data analysis included grouping them by class and by students. These categories were finalized with a review of the researcher's own journal. Next, observations were categorized on the transcriptions of focus groups and parent questionnaires. All of these categories were then compared and results are summarized in Chapter 4—Results and Discussion.

Expected Findings

The researcher anticipated that the student journals would show clear examples of what students were learning in their Spanish classes. She expected that the study would reveal indications that the selected goals of the National Standards were being met through the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum. Specifically, she expected that student journal entries would indicate how the cultural celebration activities within the

curriculum develop student awareness of cultural practices and encourage students to make comparisons between cultures.

The author anticipated she would find evidence of the students making connections with other disciplines as they learn Spanish through meaningful language activities that teach curricular content (math, science, and social studies). The student journal entries would show how it is possible to acquire new knowledge while learning a new language. The author anticipated that the research would demonstrate that the goals of expanded cultural knowledge and of making connections are attainable through strategies that maximize student learning given the limited instructional time of the program. These strategies include exclusive use of the target language and activities that appeal to the multiple intelligences found within each classroom (e.g. use of visuals, music, and learning through movement).

Ultimately, the measure of value of the *Fiestas de Yucatán* unit depends on documentation of perceptions of students, participating teachers, and parents. If the data show that the goals of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning are being met with respect to the goals of Cultures and Connections, then the curriculum has value. The standard definition of a FLEX (exploratory foreign language experience) program such as this one is that students learn *about* language and only *explore* culture. Some exploratory programs are taught entirely in English (Curtain & Pesola, 1994). The author expects that this study will indicate that a meaningful curriculum taught in the target language, in limited instructional time, can surpass the minimal goals expected of a FLEX program. Given the limited amount of research on alternative assessments that

exists at the current time with regard to foreign languages at the elementary level, these findings would be valuable information indeed.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is the Purpose of Assessment?

According to Wiggens, a proponent of expanded authentic assessment practices, the question of how to assess is an educational problem that is improperly framed. Wiggens maintains that in order to effect change in our assessment practices, we must first ask what is our purpose in assessing our students. We fail to ask what we really want our tests to do. We fail to ask, "Whose purposes do they and should they serve?" This may explain, in part, why, the "indirect, generic and mechanical test of human performance" still takes precedence over any other types of "context-sensitive human judgment of performance" (Wiggens, 1994, p. 69).

A review of literature brings forth two important considerations in determining the purpose of assessment. First, the ultimate use of the results of the assessment should be considered. This, in turn, will help determine the appropriateness of the tool to be used. Secondly, why we assess should consider the fundamental difference that exists between the curriculum we teach and the curriculum students experience. In other words, the most important "client" of assessment should be the student (Wiggens, 1994, p. 69).

Katz outlines the various goals of assessment as follows: to determine progress on significant developmental achievement, to make placement or promotion decisions, to diagnose learning and teaching problems, to help in instruction and curriculum decisions, to serve as a basis for reporting to parents, and to assist a child with assessing his or her own progress (Katz, 1997). Those who make decisions about what types of assessment to use should keep in mind that various assessment strategies and assessment tools are

uniquely suited for each of the potential purposes of assessment. Furthermore, the total assessment picture should include more than a measure of knowledge and skills but also a measure of dispositions and feelings (Katz, 1997).

Katz mentioned a specific caution with regard to young children as to the purpose of assessment. Katz asserts that the younger the child being assessed, the more errors are made in evaluation and assessment citing research from Shepard and Ratcliff (as cited in Katz, 1997). Therefore, a balance between discrete point assessments and holistic evaluations can help in interpreting results.

In education today, Rogers, (1989) discusses a new awareness of the difference between the *taught* curriculum and the *experienced* curriculum. He explains how these curricula are not the same because learners make their own personal meaning out of the "common" curriculum—the *taught* curriculum. While we know a great deal about precise measures of learning in schools such as norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests, Rogers maintains we know very little about this *experienced* curriculum.

Wiggens adds to this discussion with his assertion that the student should be the primary user of the information gained from assessment. Unfortunately, he says that while many today agree that "simplistic indirect" tests should not drive instruction, the practice continues to proliferate in our classrooms (1994, p. 69). He would agree with Rogers' concern that those types of precise measures of assessment tell only part of the story of how the learner has progressed. Wiggens' view is that "assessment should be designed and conducted to improve performance, not just audit it" (1994, p. 70).

Instead of teaching to the test, Wiggens proposes that we test to teach. In doing so, assessment becomes of educational value to students (and teachers) by helping them become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Assessment provides incentives that allow students (and teachers) to raise their own standards. Ultimately then, with this approach there might be less emphasis on just one measure of success as in the more commonly used standardized or formal testing. In testing to teach a more holistic view of progress is obtained for both the student and the teacher.

Alternative Versus Formal Assessment

Assessment and testing that is more "authentic" or real world is one of the most controversial issues in education today. Traditional forms of testing (standardized or discrete point tests, for example) have long been the most common forms of assessment. The move toward alternative testing for school improvement purposes and the expectations that educators and students be more accountable make for an interesting scenario (Hacker & Hathaway, 1991). As educators look at the differences between alternative (also named authentic or performance-based) and traditional testing, most realize that no one right answer exists for all educational scenarios. Instead, each type of "test" serves its own purpose and can assist policy makers, educators, parents, and students in making good decisions for improved learning (Hacker & Hathaway, 1991).

Before educators consider the differences between these two types of assessment, it is helpful to first define the difference between assessment (testing) and evaluation. In the classroom, good assessment is the process of collecting data about students' progress, and as such, it should guide instruction. Evaluation, the next level, analyzes and

examines the data collected through the assessment process. Evaluation assists in judging and making decisions for the student such as level of placement or grades (Shaw, 1998). Shaw's study on teacher practices in assessment points to the importance of combining instruction with assessment (collecting data) that will lead to good evaluation (making decisions).

Wiggens reminds us that in assessing, appearances can be deceiving. When we assess a student's performance, "the assessor must 'sit with' the learner in some sense to be sure that the student's answer *really* means what we think it means" (Wiggens, 1994, p. 70). Alternative assessments offer this opportunity.

One example of an alternative assessment that could be used to ascertain more about what the student has really learned about a given topic is the portfolio. Using portfolios to evaluate requires accepting at once the process *and* the product of learning. In contrast, additional or standardized testing, shows primarily the product of learning.

Traditional Assessment

Traditionally, assessment has emphasized the measurement of defined, discrete, routine skills through testing in the classroom as in standardized tests (Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters, 1992). These types of tests often involve the use of multiple-choice questions and as such are scored on the basis of correct responses. There may be little relationship between the standardized test and instructional content. The most salient characteristic of this type of test is assessment of student outcomes; little or no information is gained about the teaching and learning processes (Thompson, 1995).

The National Commission on Testing and Public Policy (1990) has identified several key problems with standardized testing. Their study states that current tests are misleading as measure of individual performance in education because of imperfections in the tests. Some tests are unfair in treatment of individuals and groups. The Commission declares that some testing practices in education undermine policies and issues meant to develop or use human talents. Tests have become instruments of public policy without adequate public accountability. The other major criticism of objective, standardized tests is that they fail to assess "real" mastery of student learning.

Currently, two traditional testing assumptions, decomposability and decontextualization, are being challenged by the alternative testing movement (Hacker & Hathaway, 1991). Regarding the first assumption, decomposability, some educators fear that more "holistic" assessments (a writing project, for example) might show greater learner progress than the objective true/false type test (Hacker & Hathaway, 1991). The second assumption, decontextualization, occurs when skills tested are not put into context. Research has shown that the context in which a skill is demonstrated is important—knowledge should not be taken away from the "context of practice and use" (Hacker & Hathaway, 1991, p. 4).

One additional criticism with traditional testing is that "teaching to the test" ignores the needs of each individual classroom's learners. Today's classrooms include more and more students who have special needs or are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse (Spinelli, 1998). Instead of showing what they know and can do,

tests are used to track these students. Subsequently there is a "dumbing down" of the curriculum and good pedagogy so that ultimately the students learn less (Nieto, 1996).

Alternative Assessment

The alternative assessment movement owes its origin to the belief that it is important to measure the processes of teaching and learning. Alternative assessments ask students to demonstrate what they have learned by analyzing, generalizing, and hypothesizing within a given context. As part of the classroom instructional process, these assessments include performance testing, portfolios, exhibits, demonstrations, and dialogue journals (Thompson, 1995). Another integral aspect can involve students planning their work and assessing themselves.

Hacker and Hathaway (1991) state four advantages claimed for alternative testing approaches. First, alternative tests measure directly what children know. Second, they emphasize higher thinking skills and collaboration. Third, they involve children in the learning process. Lastly, "teaching to the test" is allowed and encouraged; tests are instructional. Proponents of alternative testing, say that with this type of assessment students are better prepared for real life situations than if they are when assessment focuses on discrete test items that test only specific pieces of knowledge.

Performance assessments help students demonstrate and teachers ascertain the process by which a student has accomplished a task. Strange (1997) refers to this advantage by explaining that the focus of performance assessment is the "appraisal of procedural knowledge along with the result of applying that knowledge" (p. 30). Here

there is no distinction between assessment and learning and "teaching to the test" is acceptable.

However, while the alternative proponents say that too much time and money is spent on standardized testing, a major disadvantage of alternative testing is the expense and time required with its appropriate delivery and implementation for entire school districts. Actual costs are unknown because so few districts have actually used authentic assessment extensively.

Which Form of Testing is Best?

If the performance assessment movement is to achieve the status that the traditional forms of assessment enjoy in terms of being widely used, more research is needed. However, Strange (1997) maintains that the questions of reliability, validity, and comparability (which normally pertain to more standardized forms of testing) are not useful. He supports the need for qualitative research that would attend to the questions of credibility, fittingness, auditability, and confirmability as advanced by Guba and Lincoln (1981).

Hacker and Hathaway (1991) suggest that both approaches be utilized by educators and promoted by policymakers to improve assessment. Educators must recognize that multiple approaches are better for formative assessment. When it is cost effective, administrators should support, and teachers should develop, more authentic measures. Teachers and test designers need to modify standardized, multiple-choice testing systems to include assessment of prior knowledge and context, and to develop "more authentic" reading and math items such as longer reading passages and the use of

calculators. Test designers should add open-ended items to standardized multiple-choice tests. Policymakers must promote research and development between university and school systems to test reliability in larger assessment situations. Efforts to develop software and video systems to assess student learning need to continue.

While each type of assessment—traditional and alternative—has advantages and disadvantages, problems will arise when a test is misused (Powell, 1990). If decisions about curriculum and placement, for example, are based on just one measure at only one point in time, mistakes will occur and students will possibly be placed in unfair or inappropriate instructional settings.

Goals 2000, the federal education strategy to raise national standards, is proposing that more testing at the fourth, eighth, and 12th grade levels will lead to more learning. Of equal importance, however, is how the testing relates to instructional delivery, curriculum, and improvements in teacher education (Nieto, 1996). All fields of education have placed an increasing emphasis on understanding the processes that occur in teaching and learning as well as the products. Because of greater use of alternative assessments, more and more students are demonstrating higher thinking skills and the ability to make inferences in meaningful situations. No longer is just the product important; the process is valued as well.

Increasingly, our classrooms are becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse. The implications as to how we assess are significant for those learners who possess abilities and strengths that are not always apparent when these students are assessed solely through standardized or traditional testing methods. Along with greater diversity

comes greater varieties of experiences of the taught curriculum. According to Rogers, it is the experienced curriculum we know least about and, as a result, it is the curriculum most neglected by researchers and practitioners (1989). Wiggens sums it up best as follows: "If our aim is merely to monitor performance, then conventional testing is probably adequate. If our aim is to improve performance across the board, then tests must be composed of exemplary tasks, criteria, and standards (Wiggens, 1990)."

Best Practices in Foreign Language Today

Instruction

Considering the importance instruction plays in relation to the types of assessment educators use, it is helpful to look at ways that demonstrate good instructional practices. Most foreign language educators today believe that the primary goal of instruction is to prepare students to use the language communicatively. Constructivist theories of learning parallel the communicative approach to foreign language instruction and learning (Met, 1995).

Many foreign language educators demonstrate instructional methodology that other disciplines agree to be best practices today (Met, 1995). In these settings, students are actively involved in building their own knowledge. New knowledge builds on prior experience and understanding, which helps students learn more. Activities in the classroom should be authentic and allow students to apply what they are learning in a meaningful, real-life context. And perhaps most importantly, assessment reflects "the complexity of integrating knowledge and skills into performance" (p. 43).

Met reports that the research base in educational best practices for foreign languages is limited. Drawing from research in English as a second language, first language learning, and other studies done with secondary or postsecondary learners we know that learners benefit from the following instructional strategies (Met, 1995). Teachers should use the target language extensively during instruction in meaningful and understandable ways and should plan activities that involve students using the target language with each other in meaningful, real-life tasks. Teachers need to provide culture instruction in "a socio-culturally appropriate manner" (p. 44). Teachers should include "explicit instruction in strategies that facilitate making meaning" as students read or listen in the target language (p. 44). Teachers should use technology to enhance instruction and promote language learning.

Assessment

As foreign language educators have come to embrace the proficiency-based, communicative movement, alternative methods of assessment have evolved. To understand the "state of testing" in the field of foreign language education today, one must first look to the past. Approaches to teaching foreign language have changed throughout history. They include the grammar-translation method (pre-World War II), the audio-lingual method (post-World War II to the 1960s), the communicative or proficiency approach (1970s to the present), and very recently the content-based approach (Rhodes, et. al, 1997).

Whatever the approach used, appropriate assessment should mirror the teacher's instructional method as well as the course content. Growing out of the behaviorist

approach to language teaching during the 1960s, the traditional methods of testing continue to dominate the assessment picture in many secondary classrooms (Omaggio, 1986). Thus, while foreign language methodologies are changing, many teachers have difficulty incorporating open-ended, proficiency-type assessments in their classrooms (Rhodes et al., 1997).

Achievement tests in foreign languages classrooms tend to be discrete point tests that emphasize language accuracy (Rhodes et al., 1997). The main limitation of standardized tests and of many classroom tests is "their failure to mesh with instructional objectives, plans, and practices" (Genesee & Upshur, 1996, p. 257). Best practices in foreign language assessment include a wide variety of assessment methods because each testing method provides its own unique type of information (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). In a communicative and interactive learning environment a reliance on traditional testing is inappropriate.

National Foreign Language Standards and Assessment

The National Academy of Education panel on standards-based education reform states that assessment should be compatible with, and exemplify, the content standards (McLaughlin, Shepard, & O'Day, 1995). Assessment must allow students to demonstrate proficiency by multiple methods and should be accompanied by evidence of validity, reliability, and fairness.

Subsequent to the development of the foreign language content standards, the performance guidelines for K-12 students were developed by the American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages to help foreign language teachers understand the

"developmental path that second language learning takes when it occurs within a school setting" (Swender & Duncan, 1998, p. 479). In aligning their curriculum to content standards, teachers need to become well-informed about both the content standards and the performance standards, align their curricula to reflect these standards, and then design assessments that are "integrated within the curriculum" (Rhodes et al., 1997, p. 412). Research in, and more opportunities for, teacher training related to curriculum and assessment that are aligned with the content and performance standards are needed. Working together, classroom teachers and university researchers can create, adapt, and perfect strategies that measure student progress in programs that implement content standards in the foreign language classroom (Rhodes, et al., 1997).

Just as the content standards define content in relation to what students should know and be able to do in grades 4, 8, and 12 (National Standards, 1996), authentic assessment for elementary and secondary foreign language programs must show what students can do. The performance-based standards assist teachers in knowing whether their students are "on track" given the amount of time and effort their program allows. All too often foreign language educators are pressured to "achieve unrealistic goals in short amounts of instructional time" (Swender & Duncan, 1998, p. 480).

Assessment in Elementary Foreign Language Programs

The developmentally appropriate practice at the elementary school level of foreign language teaching is for the teacher to use the target language as the primary vehicle for instruction (Curtain & Pesola, 1994). Comprehension is emphasized especially in beginning levels; the ability to speak "develops in a predictable manner" (p.

84). In addition, in many programs, content (math, science, or social studies) from the elementary school curriculum is taught and reinforced in the foreign language classroom.

L. Thompson has noted that at the elementary level, many foreign language teachers use instructional strategies that are communicative in nature (personal communication, July 17, 1999). However, very little information is available on how teachers assess students at this level (Thompson, 1995). Furthermore, because the issue of assessing the language of young learners is new, Shohamy cautions the profession that research is "urgently needed" given the many different types of elementary foreign language programs now in existence (Shohamy, 1998, p. 185). While the use of alternative assessment by elementary and secondary schools is growing, such assessment differs widely among districts and even among teachers within the same district. An additional issue of concern at the elementary level is the preparation of assessments that are developmentally appropriate.

As noted earlier, in recent years there has been substantial growth in the numbers of elementary foreign language programs. While the issue of assessing language of young learners is relatively new, even less attention has been given to it in research on language testing (Shohamy, 1998). To complicate the issue, within the U.S. there are a wide variety of elementary foreign language programs, all with varying instructional settings and goals for their students. All of these factors point to the urgency and importance of research of this topic. Much more language assessment research needs to be completed and made available to elementary school foreign language educators before they will know what is best for the young language learner (Hamayan, 1998).

Most elementary foreign language educators agree that assessment must be an integral part of program evaluation (Curtain & Pesola, 1994; Donato, 1998; and Rosenbusch, 1991). Without on-going assessment, elementary school foreign language programs run the risk of being considered of marginal importance. Donato (1998) and Curtain and Pesola (1994) caution that lack of assessment procedures for foreign language programs in the early grades may contribute to their ultimate demise because lack of assessment implies that foreign language as a subject area is of minimal importance. When foreign language is regarded as an "extra," neither students nor parents regard it as being of "equal status with the rest of the curriculum" (Curtain & Peosla, 1994, p. 221).

Implications for Assessing the Young Language Learner

As reviewed earlier, good assessment is the process of collecting data about student progress to assist in the learning process. Ideally, assessment "shadows the curriculum and provides feedback to students and teachers" (Hancock, 1994, p. 1). Because foreign language instruction varies greatly from school to school, assessment has to be "grounded in the classroom and instruction" (Hamayan, 1998, p. 178). The planning process should include consideration of two basic questions. First, what is the purpose of the assessment? Second, who will use the results of assessment? After these questions have been answered, the planning of what to assess, when to assess, and how to record information may be decided (Hamayan, 1998).

These three considerations for planning assessment apply to learners of all ages, however, Shohamy (1998) explains that there are additional, unique considerations for

the young language learner. First, assessment planning should match the assessment procedure to the cognitive development and maturity of the test taker/learner. Secondly, the level of literacy in the child's first language should be considered when testing literacy in the second language. Finally, some consideration should be made of the young learner's cultural background and the socio-psychological factors, such as attitude toward test taking, since young children have not yet been "socialized in taking tests" (p. 188).

Research by Donato, Tucker, and Antonek (1994, 1996) reveals that a multiple perspectives approach is also of utmost importance when considering the young language learner. According to their documentation of an elementary school Japanese program, "no single measure or test was capable of providing a profile of achievement and proficiency" (Donato, 1998, p. 170). The use of formal and informal alternative assessment procedures is especially helpful to young learners so that they may demonstrate their language skills in more than one way (Shohamy, 1998).

In any kind of assessment Shohamy suggests a "clear definition of purpose" (1998, p.186). Assessments may measure progress or level of proficiency. While adults and adolescent learners have mastered their first language, it is important to remember that young learners are in the process of acquiring both their first and second languages. Because the instructional contexts of elementary foreign language programs vary greatly, ranging from immersion (all instruction in the target language) to FLES (sequential and articulated elementary foreign language) and FLEX (elementary foreign language exposure), this advice is especially important to consider.

Proficiency is the goal of immersion programs and as such summative assessments of language progress are important. Shohamy (1998) cautions, however, that assessment procedures for the young learner should be more formative rather than summative. These assessments should focus on progress and achievement because the young learner is in the process of learning a language. Effective assessments provide feedback, and particularly with young learners, assessment must be integrated into teaching and learning to be useful (Shohamy, 1998).

Types of Assessment Appropriate for Elementary Foreign Language

A number of standardized assessments are available for testing proficiency in various languages, but as previously mentioned, the formative assessments must be designed for the curriculum being taught from day to day. In a communicative classroom, the following suggestions are examples of alternative assessments that demonstrate what students can do in the language (Tannenbaum, 1996).

Beginning students can produce pictorial products (by labeling and drawing) or perform physical demonstrations. As more language skills emerge, students can orally perform through role-plays, interviews or by paraphrasing. KWL (What I know, What I want to know, What I learned) charts help students use the language they are learning in meaningful contexts. Portfolios serve various purposes from allowing students to display work to permitting students to become involved in making decisions about learning. They can include audio and video tapes, writing samples, artwork, conference notes, checklists, and tests or quizzes.

Dialogue journals also can be used with young language learners (Borich, 1999). Although some teachers are reluctant to use self-assessment with young learners, Shohamy advocates its use because it provides the teacher with information on young learner's perspectives on language learning and involves them in the learning process. In summary, Shohamy suggests a "variety of assessment options...as they are likely to motivate language performance" (1998, p. 188).

The Dialogue Journal as an Alternative Assessment for Elementary Foreign Language

Much has written about the use and benefits of dialogue journals with elementary school age children and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. A review of the literature reveals that dialogue journals are authentic assessments because they can be used both as a learning tool as well as an assessment tool. Jensen (1993) surveyed writing experts concerning what is now known about writing during early years. She summarizes their comments as follows: (a) writing is a natural "gateway to literacy;" (b) all children can be writers; (c) understanding writing and writers means understanding interrelated influences—cognitive, social, cultural, psychological, linguistic, and technological; and (d) we (children included) write so that both we and others can know what we think and who we are (Jensen, 1993, p. 291).

Specific observations by these writing experts affirm why dialogue journals have potential as a learning tool at the elementary level. Moffet (as cited in Jensen, 1993) states the importance of giving children a reason to write. Research has revealed that learning to write occurs best "in the same mixture with other activities" and when children have a "reason to write, an intended audience and control of subject matter and

form" (Jensen, 1993, p. 293). Florio-Ruane (as cited in Jensen, 1993) states the importance of recognizing, too, that children "experience different kinds of literacy events in school and nonschool contexts" (Jensen, 1993, p. 292). Because of this, many teachers and researchers now recognize that the learning of writing is a social process. To provide children writing experiences that focus only on correctness in spelling, punctuation, usage, diction, paragraph structure, and organization (adult standards) denies them the opportunity to see themselves as writers. Atwell summarizes it best this way: "Every child, regardless of ability or background, can have a voice as a writer" (as cited in Jensen, 1993, p. 292).

The dialogue journal is a whole language activity that helps students learn a second language much in the same way they learned their first language. As Pazalt (1995) explains, whole language is an approach or attitude to teaching language that views language as a "whole entity." Thus, the skills of writing, speaking, reading and listening should be integrated (Patzelt, 1995). According to Hall (1994), interactive writing can facilitate children's writing skills (1994). He agrees that this type of writing gives the child a reason to be an "author," and aids in the transition from oral to written communication.

In prefacing a case study of the development of writing in a first grade ESL classroom, Peyton (1990) explains how teachers have mistakenly assumed that writing was too difficult a task for ESL students. In making this incorrect judgment, some teachers have spent far too much time in teaching basic vocabulary and information about sounds, letters, and words. Peyton's research with ESL students confirms that basic skill

approaches (phonics and workbook exercises, for example) do not foster writing development. An additional finding supported in Peyton's case study is that situations that promote writing development are those in which children have frequent opportunities to meaningfully communicate in writing.

In the case study classroom, ESL children did not have to wait to become fluent in English or have mastered the English writing system (Peyton, 1990). Beginning writers in this class never had formal phonics lessons. Instead as their oral English skills emerged, so did their writing skills as they learned to read, watched writing being modeled from them, and wrote in the meaningful, communicative context of the dialogue journal. As a learning tool for the ESL student, the dialogue journal is at once non-threatening, non-evaluative, and motivational because it provides an audience for the child's communication.

As an assessment tool, teachers of ESL students report that students' writing becomes more fluent, interesting, and correct over time after using these interactive journals. Consequently, she found that improved writing ability transfers to other class writing as well. The research Peyton has done with ESL students shows that students are continually giving feedback about what they understand in class as well as progress with their language abilities. According to Peyton, this on-going written record then can lead to improved instruction for each individual. Keeping a journal allows assessment to occur on a formative, daily basis as is appropriate for young learners.

Peyton found that the logistics of reading and responding to dialogue journals might discourage busy classroom teachers' use of this activity. According to Peyton, the

journal partners do not have to be teachers. Other options might be to have students write with classroom paraprofessionals, with classmates, or with another class of older or more proficient students. Teachers who have found ways to manage the process report that the information they gain about students' interests and problems as well as the feedback received (in the journals) about classroom activities pays off in facilitating the instructional planning process (Peyton, 1993).

Appropriateness of Qualitative Research for this Study

Rossman and Rallis (1998) define qualitative research as being naturalistic, emergent and evolving, and interpretive. Qualitative researchers draws on multiple methods that respect the participants as they view social worlds holistically. During the research process, the researcher reflects on her role as participant and recognizes that her personal role "shapes" the study. Finally, a qualitative research report also uses "complex reasoning that is multifaceted" and involves repetition (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 9).

Unlike quantitative inquiry with its "pre-specified intent," this research (including the pilot study) has been evolutionary (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 6). One particular genre of qualitative inquiry, action research, probably best describes the direction of this study. Greenwood and Levin (1998) characterize action research as follows: (a) it is carried out by a professional researcher and a community desiring to improve their situation; (b) it promotes broad participation in the process of research and, as a result, leads to a better or more "just situation" for the participants; and (c) as a group the researcher and the participants take actions based on what they have learned and then

interpret the results (1998, p. 4). The first step in any action research project is to define a problem that must be resolved. Then, the researcher and participants move ahead by collaborating to solve the problem. This process "democratizes" the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Greenwood & Levin, 1998, p. 4).

These action research characteristics describe the process of this study. Once the problem (lack of assessment for the *Fiesta de Yucatán* unit) came into focus, the researcher sought collaboration of second grade teachers in determining how best to proceed in assessing second grade students given the constraints of short instructional time periods. Interestingly, prior to this collaboration, the students themselves also contributed (inadvertently) to the design process by virtue of their creative responses to three simple questions the author posed four years ago: During our imaginary trip to Yucatán, (a) what did you learn, (b) what did you like about our trip, and (c) what would you have changed?" The insightful responses of second graders to those questions revealed that they are capable of sharing what they learn in written form. The combination of the author's experiences at the Performance Assessment institute, the students' initial responses, and input from their teachers, all contributed in an evolutionary way to the idea of dialogue journals as a possible form of assessment.

As the pilot study proceeded, ways to improve the assessment procedure also evolved. Three examples follow of adaptations that give the student writers more direction: (a) the idea of giving students topics to write about after each Spanish lesson helped them get started writing; (b) written placement of the topic as a header on each

page in the student journal helped students stay focused; (c) writing Spanish vocabulary words on the board encouraged students to use Spanish in their journals.

In addition, the idea of getting parent input through students sharing and parents writing about that shared experience, both occurred during the pilot study. Lastly, in the final phase of data collection (fall, 1999) it was decided to host two different teacher focus groups of teachers (participating journal teachers and non-participating teachers) to strengthen the teacher perspective of data collected.

As a result of the evolutionary nature of this research and the teacher-researcher collaboration, an improved and more "just" situation emerged for the participating students. The assessment process for this project has evolved to the point where it is now possible, given the focus of the research question, to evaluate through this process the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum.

Trustworthiness of this Qualitative Research

Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that four different constructs characterize good qualitative research. They are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. While these constructs parallel the "conventional positivist paradigm," the authors maintain that for qualitative research these constructs are the criteria of trustworthiness—a parallel of rigor for quantitative research.

The first construct, credibility, addresses the question of qualitative validity. If a study explores a problem or describes a setting, for example, the study must show the "complexities of processes and interactions" throughout the description of the data (Marshall, 1999, p. 193). This means that the boundaries of a study must be clearly

stated. In this study, the research proposal limited ultimate evaluation of the curriculum to two questions that relate directly to the National Foreign Language Standards: if the curriculum has value, it will meet the standards of learning defined for the two goals of Cultures and in Connections. Standard 2.1 of the goal "Cultures" requires that "students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied," and Standard 2.2 states "students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied." Standard 3.1 of the goal Connections communicates that "students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language."

The second construct, transferability, addresses the quantitative concern of generalizability. Marshall (1999) explains that the researcher who attempts to transfer results of one qualitative study to her own situation must make adequate judgments about and arguments for the initial study's relevance to her own. To counter challenges of external validity, the researcher must state the "theoretical parameters" of the research. For this study, the author has reviewed literature concerning theories on assessment in general and assessment as it applies to foreign language learning in general, and at the elementary school level. The author has also reviewed theories on writing for elementary children—in particular the dialogue journal. In making judgments as to the value of the curriculum, data collection and analysis consider these theories.

Another strategy of demonstrating qualitative generalizability is to triangulate multiple sources of data. Berg refers to this methodological technique as "the use of multiple lines of sight" (1989, p. 4). In combining sources of data, the researcher obtains

a better and more complete representation of reality, a more complete collection of symbols and theoretical concepts, and a means of confirming these elements (Berg, 1989). For this research, (a) the perspectives of the students, (b) their classroom teachers, and (c) their parents, illuminate judgments made about the research question, and in doing so strengthen this study's use for other settings.

The third construct, dependability, accounts for changing conditions throughout the duration of the research. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research acknowledges changes inherent in the social world; because of this, qualitative research cannot be replicated. Throughout each semester during the development and pilot testing of the journals there have been changes in phrasing of topics for certain lessons. Other examples of adaptations include posting words in the classroom that student might include in their entries or use to label their illustrations and writing the question for each lesson at the top of each journal page. Again, the uniqueness of the setting and the changes that might occur in the context of the research make exact replication of qualitative research impossible.

The fourth construct, confirmability, requires the researcher to evaluate the research according to the data obtained. This construct is similar to the quantitative criterion of objectivity. Marshall (1999) cautions, "The qualitative criterion is, do the data help confirm the finding and lead to the implications?" (p. 194). The danger that participant observer judgment could cause data analysis to be biased requires that the researcher build in strategies that would limit this weakness. Several strategies mentioned by Marshall have been employed in this study. First, an outsider managed the

focus group discussions. Second, a checking and rechecking process analyzed and searched for themes and categories in the following manner. First the data was read from the point of view of parents and teachers. Then the data was read from the point of view of students (in the dialogue journals) to verify similarities and differences in observations. This cross-checking process contributed to the study's confirmability.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The Community and Its Elementary Foreign Language Program

The program for which this research was done is part of a school district located in a growing suburb. For some time now, this district has had a reputation for offering one of the "premier athletic and academic programs in the state" (Holstrum, 1999). Its location offers parents excellent employment opportunities within one half hour's driving time both north and south of the community. The community is primarily Caucasian, English speaking, and middle class (U. S. Department of Commerce, 1990). 1990 Census data give the median family income as $36,582. Over the years the community has demonstrated that it values education and supports its schools.

In 1983, parent support created an extracurricular elementary foreign language program in the school district. Parents organized a local foreign language association to promote the study of foreign languages in the community and to manage an extracurricular elementary foreign language program. After the extracurricular program had been in existence for three years, the community's foreign language association pressed the school district to study the potential for an elementary curricular foreign language program. A case study (Borich, 2000) revealed that initially there was resistance toward the idea of putting an elementary school program in place within the school day from administration, curricular foreign language teachers, and elementary classroom teachers.

A committee was named by the district and after two years of intensive study, recommendations on how to implement such a program were presented to the school

board. The administration acted upon the advice of the curricular foreign language teachers by hiring two teachers to begin a curricular elementary school foreign language. Students received ten minutes of foreign language instruction every three school days, following a six-day rotation in special subjects. Because of this rotation, the students in the curricular foreign language program received only 20 minutes twice every six days. Also unique to the program as designed are gaps in instruction in Spanish from year to year. Beginning in grade one and continuing through grade five, students receive instruction for one semester in Spanish; during the following semester, they receive instruction in French.

After three years, elementary classroom teacher support had grown for this program resulting in an extension in the amount of instructional time (Borich, 2000). The instructional time was increased from ten to fifteen minutes. Instructional time per week, therefore, averages 25 minutes. Given the additional fact that students learn Spanish for only half of the school year, the delivery of instruction fits the definition of a foreign language exploratory (FLEX) program. The style of instruction inherent in this curriculum's design, however, is more in keeping with that of a foreign language in the elementary school (FLES) program (exclusive use of the target language and instruction that complements the elementary curriculum) instead of FLEX (exploratory foreign language experience) (Curtain & Pesola, 1994).

Selection of Research Participants

For this research, student journal and parent questionnaire analysis was conducted with two classes of second graders. These two classes were chosen because of their

classroom teachers' interest in learning more about the foreign language learning of their students and willingness to have their students write in a journal about their Spanish classes. In this study they will be referred to as Teacher A and Teacher B. The classrooms, located in different buildings within the school district, were of mixed gender and varying student abilities. Parents of these participating students received a letter stating the purpose of the student journals and requesting permission for their child's participation through a form distributed in August of 1999 (Appendix A).

The participating teachers also received a letter stating the purpose of the research and requesting their participation in a focus group after the semester had concluded (Appendix B). Both parents and participating teachers were assured through these letters that confidentiality was a primary concern and that their identity and that of the participating students would not be revealed by the researcher.

As plans were made for the focus group, the researcher decided that it would be beneficial to have an additional focus group of second grade teachers who had not participated in the journal writing project. The first focus group included Teachers A and B as well as three teachers who had participated in the researcher's pilot study of Spanish journal writing. Teachers from the remaining 14 second grades in the district were invited to the second focus group; ultimately six of them participated. Having data from two focus groups would help ascertain whether the perspectives of participating teachers differ from those of teachers who had not participated in the student journal writing. Letters of information about the project and assurances of confidentiality were sent to these teachers as well (Appendix B). In response to the request for participation in this

project, all teachers who were invited agreed to participate fully and none indicated they had concerns about the design of the project nor about confidentiality.

Development of the *Fiesta de Yucatán* Curriculum

In March of 1995 the author received a grant from the *Fundación Cultural de Yucatán* for a proposal to visit Yucatán in order to learn about Yucatán's cultural celebrations and to share that information with foreign language teachers at a regional conference. The author wrote the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum as a result of this grant. The unit was piloted in classes she taught as an elementary foreign language teacher and as the demonstration class teacher for the 1995 Teacher Partnership Institute sponsored by the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center at Iowa State University. Thus, the design of this unit brings together culture, language, and content around the thematic center of "celebrations." The choice of the theme of celebrations is especially appropriate to lower elementary students because of their natural interest in, and enthusiasm for, celebrations in their own communities. Although the thematic focus is celebrations, the resulting curriculum also addresses geography, weather, and the ancient culture of the Maya.

Thematic instruction, as used in the *Fiestas de Yucatán unit,* is an effective curriculum planning tool for the elementary foreign language classroom for the following reasons. First, as an integrated approach to teaching, it can complement the existing school curricula, such as math, science, reading, and language arts (Curtain & Pesola, 1994). Second, thematic planning can be a "point of departure for the implementation of national and state standards" (Rosenbusch, 1997, p. 15). The unit focuses on two

different celebrations—a child's birthday party and the Posadas (nine Mexican religious celebrations held the nine days before Christmas). In this unit students experience culture by connecting ideas and information through the thematic focus rather than in isolation, as often occurs in foreign language and social studies classes.

The national student standards for foreign language learning (1996) propose that effective programs integrate five goals: Communication, Connections, Comparisons, Communities, and Cultures. This thematic unit is designed to address all five of these goals. In the unit, for example, as students learn to communicate in Spanish (Communication), they make connections between the subject areas of math, science, geography, social studies, and the arts (Connections). Because students "travel" to Yucatán, hear and speak Spanish throughout the trip, their awareness of similarities and differences becomes evident as students compare and contrast Yucatán with their own community (Comparisons). As students make these comparisons, they discover that in many ways we share significant commonalities. Finally, having experienced Yucatán and acquired songs and language typical of the target language and culture, the students share their experiences at home (Communities). Through the integration possible within a thematic unit, an interweaving of these five goals occurs.

While the unit provides experience for students in each of the five goals, two of the goals, and their corresponding standards, are emphasized. A key goal of this thematic unit is for students to gain knowledge of, and better understanding of, other cultures. Standard 2.1 of the goal "Cultures" requires that "students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied."

Standard 2.2 states "students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied." In the Yucatán unit students learn about a Yucatecan birthday and experience a Christmas celebration unique to Yucatán.

An additional goal of the unit is to help students make connections with other disciplines and acquire information while learning Spanish. Content standard 3.1 clarifies that "students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language." In the Yucatán unit, students compare types of houses and weather in Yucatán with their home state, Iowa. They use maps to locate four different locations within Yucatán. They use math concepts to study the ancient number system of the Maya.

A Descriptive Summary of the Fiesta Curriculum

From the very first lesson of the semester, students in this study responded to a question by writing in their dialogue journals about a topic pertinent to the lesson (Appendix C). The following narration details the flow of lessons in this unit from the beginning of the semester until the end. From among the journal questions to which the students responded, the researcher selected eight for this study, which are included within this description.

In late August, the semester began with lessons that reviewed colors using a color song and a color story, weather and commands, and a Mexican legend students had learned in first grade. In lesson four, the teacher discussed the importance of a good imagination to help "carry" students to Yucatán. Students located on a map the Mexican

state of Yucatán and their home state. In doing so, they made comparisons of size and location, the first of many comparisons to their own communities.

In lesson five, students boarded an imaginary airplane made of bulletin board paper marked with numbered chairs as seats. The teacher, wearing a pilot's cap, gave instructions for boarding the plane, eating and sleeping on the plane, and disembarking. Students watched the hours go by on a toy clock until their safe arrival in Yucatán. After deplaning, students discovered how hot it is in September in Yucatán. A weather song they had learned in first grade helped them make yet another comparison with Yucatán and their own community, a comparison that continued in most of the ensuing lessons.

A weather concentration game facilitated the learning of new weather vocabulary. As students viewed photographs of the four locations they would "visit," they began to gain an awareness of additional differences and similarities between Yucatán and their own community. Students also enjoyed meeting *Señor Tucán*, a toucan puppet that gave students commands (a widely accepted strategy technique for teaching second language), and discussed the weather asking the students how they were doing in that weather.

In lesson seven, students viewed houses in Mérida (the capital city of Yucatán) and Tinum (a Mayan village). Students made comparisons between the houses in Mérida, which have flat roofs, and houses in Tinum which have roofs made of palm leaves. The first selected journal question follows: *Mérida is a large city and Tinum is a small town in Yucatán. What did you notice about the houses in those places?*

In the next lesson, students looked at photographs of the great pyramid at Chichen Itzá (Mayan ruins), and briefly, in English, discussed what the word "ancient" means.

The second selected journal question follows: *Today you saw some pictures of Yucatán. Here is a list of names of places we will be visiting. Can you tell something about each place?*

In lesson eight, students were introduced to the ancient numerals of the Maya. After observing the pattern of numbers from one to six, students predicted how the Maya might have written numbers seven through thirteen. On-going practice continued throughout these initial lessons of the "trip" to practice numbers, colors, weather vocabulary, and commands with *Señor Tucán.* The first journal question students answered on this topic follows: *Here is a list of numbers in Spanish from 0-15. Draw or tell how to form some of the ancient Mayan numbers from Chichen Itzá.*

The recycling and spiraling of vocabulary needed for learning a second language occurred in the retelling of the story *The Rainbow and the Birds* (Alonso, 1985) for lessons nine and ten. The vocabulary in this story is similar to that of the story and song which was introduced later in the unit. Students attached meaning to key words and phrases of these stories as they performed actions that demonstrate the meaning of the words. For example, hands intertwined and moving as a bird would fly indicates a bird. Moving one hand in the shape of an arch indicates a rainbow. The toucan puppet also reviewed this vocabulary with the students as it gave these same commands. In these lessons, students also compared the countryside of their home state with that of Yucatán by viewing photographs that illustrate the flat topography of Yucatán.

In lesson thirteen, students worked with a weather comparison chart to compare and write down for September and October the weather for their home state and Yucatán.

The students were introduced to the concept of "countryside" with photographs of Iowa and Yucatán. The first journal question on the countryside was: *Today we saw some pictures of the countryside. What do you notice about the countryside in Yucatán? Is it the same or different from the countryside in Iowa?*

The teacher introduced the story *De Colores* (Teacher Resource Center, 1992) using the big book. As with the story *The Rainbow and the Birds*, students performed actions that helped review previous vocabulary. A key vocabulary word and concept for the story *De Colores* is "spring." Because the temperatures for Yucatán are extremely warm for the months of March, April and May, students discovered that the concept of spring for Iowans is different from what Yucatecans experience.

In lesson fifteen, students took a brief side "trip" to the countryside. During this trip they reviewed slides of previous locations, reviewed the weather for spring in Yucatán, and saw how tortillas are made in the village, Tinum. The journal entry follows: *Today we pretended to visit the countryside. What did you see and do in Spanish class today?* Lessons sixteen and seventeen addressed the topic of tortillas and corn with a story about Quetzalcoátl (figure of ancient Mexico's mythology) and a demonstration lesson on tortilla making.

During the month of November students learned about a Mexican birthday as seen through the eyes of María in the big book *Mi Cumpleaños* (Torres, 1994). During this time, practice and reinforcement of previously introduced vocabulary continued. Lessons sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen helped children sequence a series of events on María's birthday. The first journal question asked the following: *Tell how María celebrated her*

birthday in Yucatán. The second birthday question asked: *How is a birthday in Iowa different from a birthday in Yucatán. How is it the same?*

The introduction to celebrations continueed through December with activities that provided experiences with the Posadas. As students watched a mini-drama of little toy people playing the part of Yucatecans, they observed the sense of community engendered by this pre-Christmas celebration. The sense of community these celebrations foster was emphasized in this demonstration instead of the religious element of the Posadas.

Before students role-played a Posada procession during class, they had two additional opportunities to view the Posada celebration—first through the book *Nine Days to Christmas* (Ets & Labastida, 1959), and secondly through a transparency activity that simulates the mini-drama of a Posada procession. The journal questions asked: (a) *Tell me about Ceci's first Posada party.* and (b) *How is the Posada in Yucatán different from a birthday in Yucatán?*

In lesson twenty-one, students participated in a simulated Yucatecan Posada. Three large tagboard, palm-leaf house fronts provided doors behind which two student volunteers stood. As the class proceeded as a group from one house to the next, they discovered that only at the last house (the one with the piñata) were they welcomed in to celebrate. Paper lanterns and singing created an atmosphere of procession, while hot chocolate and buñuelos provided food for the celebration. The last Posada journal question asked: *Tell about our Posada celebration today. What was it like? What did we do?*

After the winter break typical of most schools in late December, only a few classes remained before the "return flight" to the students' home community. Students discussed the weather of January by using the comparative weather chart as many times as possible before returning home. Now they were ready to answer the following journal question: *Our pretend trip to Yucatán is almost over. When you really visit Yucatán, what would be your favorite month? It might help to look at your weather chart.*

During these final lessons, they listened to the song *De Colores* and reviewed actions that accompany the song with help from *Señor Tucán.* Vocabulary review also occurred through a tortilla chanting game. Students experienced the "trip" home in the same way that it began, boarding the paper airplane piloted by the teacher. Upon returning home, students compared the weather of Yucatán on the day they left with their community's current temperature. The last journal question asked: *You are ready to tell your friends about your trip to Yucatán. What was the best part of your trip? Would you ever like to go back? Why?*

Student Journal Writing

Unique to this research project, students had an opportunity to write about each lesson's experiences through a dialogue journal that was responded to by the Spanish teacher before the beginning of the next lesson. Both classes that participated in this study received the same lessons in the same order. Before leaving each lesson, the Spanish teacher read student responses from the previous lesson of at least two student journals to affirm good student participation as evidenced through their writing. Then the

Spanish teacher asked for a volunteer from the class to read the next question aloud for class members.

The participating teachers supervised the writing of the journals after the Spanish teacher left class. Teacher A provided fifteen minutes for the journal writing immediately following the Spanish class. Because Teacher A had not watched or participated in the Spanish class, she did not assist students in answering questions (this information is verified in the focus group transcripts).

In contrast, Teacher B explained that she was more involved in the journal writing process for two reasons. She found it necessary to restate and sometimes discuss the journal question for her students because of a gap in time (one-half hour) between the Spanish class and journal writing time. Also, since she expected students to transfer previously taught English writing skills (sentence structure and use of capital letters and periods), she allowed at least twenty minutes writing time and monitored student writing to encourage transfer of English writing skills. For both classes, however, the Spanish teacher responded to students' journals in English and Spanish giving comments to students, clarifying information, and answering questions.

In order to accomplish the five goals of the national student standards for foreign language study, students need many opportunities to use communication strategies, learning strategies, and critical thinking skills. This journal provided beginning second language students an automatic audience for their emerging English writing skills as well as an opportunity to think critically about their Spanish class experiences. Documenting evidence of learning according to the standards through this curriculum is the goal of this

study. If such evidence can be found, curricula such as this one might offer a valuable example of how to implement the standards in an early start language program. In doing so, we "raise expectations for students in the United States" so that their language skills might be more in line with those of students in other countries (Redmond, p. viii, 1999).

A Pilot Study in Dialogue Journals for the Fiesta Curriculum

The author's participation during the summer of 1997 in the Performance Assessment Institute of the National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center, Iowa State University, further enhanced the author's awareness of and interest in alternative assessment. The institute required that participants formulate an action plan that would assist them in implementing some aspect of performance assessment. The author's plan included the development a pilot study for which she initiated a dialogue journal project during the fall of 1997. For this pilot study, two classes of second graders wrote dialogue journals to their teacher (the author) about their experiences during the Yucatán unit in Spanish class.

The First Pilot Study

As part of the pilot study, students wrote without any direction from their classroom teacher or the author, their Spanish teacher. The classroom teachers simply provided time following the Spanish class for students to write about their Spanish class experiences on a journal page the Spanish teacher provided. Each journal page included an illustration, but students were given no guidance as to topics for each entry other than the following directions: Write about Spanish class today. This pilot study demonstrated

that beginning writers reveal fascinating information about what they are learning and that they can document this learning in written form or through illustrations.

At the conclusion of the pilot study, classroom teachers spoke of the need to give students guidance to help them get started writing. The following school year, the Spanish teacher continued the journal experiment in a second pilot study with three second grade teachers—two of whom had not participated before in the journal writing. This time, however, students were given topics after each Spanish lesson on which to write. Providing timely and appropriate topics for their entries proved to be a challenge because the Spanish teacher occasionally altered lesson plans.

The Second Pilot Study

For the second pilot study, as in the previous year the Spanish teacher took the responsibility of reading and responding to the journals; the cooperating teachers provided time after Spanish class to write and assist as needed in getting the students started. In order to evaluate the journal keeping, two features were added to the second pilot study. The researcher-teacher conducted a focus group of past and current participating teachers. In addition, a pilot questionnaire was sent to parents of students who had completed the journals.

The purpose of the focus group was to ascertain the value of journals for the students and the author as teacher-researcher. The focus group provided the Spanish teacher a rare opportunity to confer with busy classroom teachers about the value of the journal writing activity. In addition, the teachers contributed insights and suggestions as to how to proceed with the journal writing in the formal research study.

In the focus group discussion teachers confirmed that using journals as a learning activity gives students a springboard for beginning to write. The Spanish teacher responded to every student's dialogue journal; thus the dialogue journal format provided the beginning writer an audience for their writing. Teachers reported that this feature contributed to making the experience a success for every student. They noted that students frequently shared with them what had been written to them. The discussion revealed that at the second grade level classroom teachers assess students on their ability to express themselves in written form, rather than on specific writing skills such as the usage of correct punctuation. Because second grade students sometimes have difficulty coming up with their own writing plans, the teachers suggested that the Spanish teacher provide a topic on which to write.

All the teachers agreed that accountability for what the student had learned during class was a primary benefit to keeping journals about Spanish class. The students were more involved in their Spanish class because they knew they would be expected to share what they had observed. One teacher asserted, "I think there's an observable participation increase because they know that they are going to write." The teachers noted that students with low motivation for learning are more tuned in because they know they will be held accountable through the journal writing. In addition, the teachers agreed that the activity integrated well with the overall goal of allowing students practice in learning how to express themselves through writing.

The pilot focus group discussion resulted in several suggestions for the Spanish teacher which were incorporated in the research study: (a) students need the opportunity

to illustrate when writing skills are not yet developed enough to allow them to express themselves easily in writing, (b) teachers suggested that the minimum amount of time to complete illustrations and entries be fifteen minutes and that the writing time should immediately follow the Spanish class, (c) the Spanish teacher should post words in the classroom that student might include in their entries or use to label their illustrations, and (d) the question for each lesson should be written at the top of each journal page.

The researcher-teacher gathered parental input through a pilot questionnaire sent home to parents of students who had written in journals about their Spanish class experiences. The questionnaire asked two open-ended questions that parents were asked to respond to after reading the journals with their child: (a) What impressed you most about your student's Spanish journal? (b) What does your student have to say about writing the journals after each Spanish class?

An analysis was done examining responses from the pilot questionnaires of various categories or themes. Parents acknowledged appreciation of having an opportunity to know more about what their child was learning in Spanish class. A resounding number of parents noted that the dialogue journal helped their children learn by allowing them to reflect on what occurred during the Spanish class, thus helping them remember what went on during class. The other area of significance is that parents affirmed that their children showed through their journal entries that they were learning about weather, math, writing, geography, and another culture. These two areas of note by parents corroborate what was learned with the results of the pilot focus group with cooperating teachers. Most importantly, the pilot study of dialogue journals showed that

children can demonstrate that they are learning Spanish and are able to apply that learning to other disciplines as well.

Data Collection Instruments

The student journal was the primary instrument for data collection in this study. The journal is essentially an unstructured questionnaire soliciting open-ended responses (Appendix C). Although the student journals include more than twenty different questions and responses, the researcher selected eight for analysis. After preliminary data analysis revealed apparent themes and categories, the researcher perceived a need to reduce the amount of data; thus, she then determined which of the more than 20 questions would best focus on the learning of Cultures and Connections. Eight selected questions (italicized in Appendix C) and one additional topic (learning of Mayan number system) formed the basis of the content analysis of the student journals.

The parent questionnaire also solicits open-ended responses. A permission form (Appendix A) that was sent to parents included information about the student journals and introduced the idea of integrating Spanish objectives and assessment through this writing project. The form also overviewed the research process and previewed the questionnaire that would be sent to parents at the end of the semester along with their child's journal later. This questionnaire was to be filled out after the parent and child had read and discussed the journals together.

Research Procedures

Focus Groups

An outside moderator conducted a focus group with two groups of second grade teachers. The purpose of having two focus groups was to determine whether or not the journal writing process influenced the participating journal teachers' responses in regard to the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum. The focus groups provided an additional perspective regarding student learning from the viewpoint of the classroom teachers.

The researcher was not present at the focus group meeting to avoid bias that might affect discussions and to avoid inhibiting the classroom teacher from participating fully in the discussions. Attending the journal focus group were the two teachers who had allowed their students to journal for this study and three teachers who had done so from the pilot studies. The researcher added a non-journal focus group of second grade teachers whose students had not completed journals in order to gain their perspective on the curriculum.

The questions for the focus group discussions addressed two main areas with respect to the curriculum: (a) How much culture have the children learned from their imaginary trip? and (b) How many connections they had made to the classroom curriculum?

Teacher-Researcher Journal

The teacher-researcher wrote in a journal after each time she responded to the student journals. The goal of the researcher journal was to record "in the field" reflections that might otherwise be lost. Copies of exemplary student entries or student

entries that revealed mistaken perceptions were collected, noted, and reflected upon in this journal. The teacher-researcher journal guided the researcher in selecting the eight questions for content analysis.

Data Analysis

Reflection on the data was on-going through the data collection period by means of the teacher-researcher journal; however, data analysis began in earnest with a preliminary reading of the parent questionnaires, focus group transcriptions, and the student journal transcriptions. Berg (1989) recommends an "open coding process" that creates many different categories in order to open inquiry of the data. The researcher conducted the open coding process with each data set by asking the following question about the data: *Can dialogue journals provide documentation of student learning in a cultural unit taught in Spanish?* During this process, the researcher analyzed the data carefully by keeping track of details through a tally of the various categories from each data set.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) recommend that novice researchers first organize the data through a similar procedure. Next, the researcher generates themes, categories, or patterns. Most qualitative research experts agree that "nearly as many analysis strategies exist as qualitative researchers" (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 17). This generic analysis process of starting with many categories or themes allows the novice researcher to then proceed to more in-depth analysis as they code the data according to these themes. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), "Here the researcher does not search for the

exhaustive . . .categories of the statistician but, instead, identifies the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting" (p. 154).

Having determined themes and categories from focus groups and parent questionnaires using these processes, the author proceeded to reading and re-reading of the student journals. At this point the researcher reduced the amount of data to be considered by limiting the matrix content analysis to eight selected questions in the journal. The eight questions were selected according to the themes and categories that emerged from preliminary data analysis. The researcher then set up the coding process by organizing a spreadsheet on a matrix and coding student observations into the appropriate category on the matrix.

Through this process, it became apparent to the researcher that drawings from the student journals that portrayed vivid recollections of their imaginary trip to Yucatán should be included as evidence of learning in the content analysis along with the written recollections. The researcher analyzed frequencies in categories for learning about culture and in making connections according to what the question asked.

To complete the "coding frames" process, the researcher continued in the same manner with the two ancillary sources—the parent questionnaires and both journal and non-journal teacher focus group transcriptions. Additional themes emerged at this point in the process resulting from each group's own unique perspective. The researcher then reflected on the comparisons that could now be made of observations common between the two focus groups and unique to each group.

The final step, after themes had been defined and coding had been completed, required that the researcher evaluate . . . developing understandings and explore them through the data" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 157). Key to this search process is the need to challenge the understanding, look for negative instances of patterns, and build these challenges into the conclusions being made. Good research challenges the obvious patterns and searches for "other, plausible explanations for these data and the linkages among them" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 157).

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As compared with traditional testing methods, alternative assessments can measure directly what children should know, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and by involving children in the learning process, can be instructional (Hacker & Hathaway, 1991). The question posed by the researcher asks whether or not dialogue journals as an alternative assessment can document learning from the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum, a thematic unit taught in Spanish.

While the *Fiestas de Yucatán* unit provides experience for students in each of the five goals, two of the goals of the national student standards for foreign languages, and corresponding standards, are emphasized. This research looks for evidence of student learning related to the goals of Cultures and Connections. This kind of assessment measures the "experienced curriculum" which, according to Rogers (1989), is the curriculum we know least about. Rogers defines the "experienced curriculum" as the curriculum that results when students make their own meanings out of the "seemingly common experiences of the classroom" (Rogers, 1989, p. 714). Learning that results from the experienced curriculum cannot be effectively measured through standardized testing, which is the customary method of assessing the taught curriculum.

A key goal of this thematic unit is for students to gain knowledge of and better understand other cultures. Standard 2.1 of the goal "Cultures" requires that "students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied," and Standard 2.2 states "students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied." An

additional goal of the unit is to help students make connections with other disciplines and acquire information while learning Spanish. Content standard 3.1 conveys that "students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language."

The three sources of data in this study are student entries for eight selected questions in the student journals, transcriptions from two teacher focus groups, and parent questionnaires. Since the researcher was an active participant in the context of this study, the researcher felt that utilizing these three methods of inquiry would enhance the validity of results. The researcher selected the eight open-ended student questions according to each question's potential for giving evidence of learning Cultures and making Connections.

Teacher perspectives from the focus groups provided the researcher a way to identify major points of agreement and divergence of opinion regarding evidence of learning that they have observed in their students (U. S. Department of Transportation, 1994). The parent questionnaires provided parental interpretation of student learning through discussion with their child of the student journals at home. The teacher-researcher journal provided the researcher an avenue for on-going reflection throughout the period of data collection.

Preliminary Review of Data

While the student journals are the centerpiece of this research, the teacher focus groups and the parent questionnaires served as a point of departure in reviewing data. A preliminary review of these two ancillary sources searched for potential themes or categories that would allow coding of the student journal data to begin. Morgan (1988)

reminds the researcher that in reporting on data one must avoid covering too many topics in too much detail—ultimately confusing the reader. Data analysis is a process of maintaining an appropriate "tension between the richness of data and the remoteness of the reader from the sources of data" (Morgan, 1988, p. 70). The preliminary review of data helped the researcher focus only on what is most important from the data.

The researcher had read, responded to and reflected upon the student journals throughout the data collection period. Thus, she had an overall familiarity with potential themes. During that period, all entries had been transcribed for later coding and analysis. In addition, photocopies of unique student journals were made to allow the researcher to have copies on hand as she reflected periodically on the student journals. These written reflections were noted in the researcher journal, which provided written documentation of on-going reflections helpful in the student journal ethnographic analysis. Berg (1989) defines ethnography as "a process that attempts to describe and interpret social expression between people and groups" (p. 52).

At the end of the semester children took their journals home to share, read, and discuss with their parents. Of the 51 transcribed journals, 39 children returned parent questionnaires and the original journal. The researcher was then able to use the original 39 journals and 12 transcribed journals for the content and ethnographic analysis. The researcher considered only original journals, however, in the coding of student journals for the eight selected questions.

Following the data collection semester, the researcher began a multi-layered process to find evidence of student learning from lessons in the *Fiesta de Yucatán*

curriculum through the student dialogue journals. This search focused on what students had learned about the Yucatán culture and what connections students had made with the second grade curriculum of the elementary classroom. A preliminary review of the parent questionnaires and the teacher focus group transcripts revealed emerging themes that were used as categories for coding when reviewing the student dialogue journals. The researcher recorded those themes and categories and the frequencies of their mention onto note cards. In this initial review, several themes and categories emerged from the data of the two ancillary sources that were, although interesting, not necessarily related to the research question. The data written on the note cards was useful later in setting up a content analysis of the two sources.

The researcher next did a similar preliminary search for themes and categories apparent in the student journal transcriptions. The coded information from these transcriptions was then transferred to note cards. Using the note card information, the researcher then created categories that were related to the research question at hand—the learning of culture and in the making of connections.

Through this process the researcher first noted that both the parents' and teachers' comments on what students were learning from the curriculum in the Spanish lessons about the second grade curriculum was all-encompassing. Second, in contrast, the student journals provided a multitude of details about curriculum content that had been reinforced in the Spanish class that was not observed in the comments from the parents nor the teachers. Third, themes and categories that emerged in the transcriptions of the

parent questionnaires and teacher focus groups regarding the curriculum were unique and appropriate to the perspectives of each group.

For example, teachers mentioned that the many age-appropriate types of teaching practices used throughout the semester by the Spanish teacher—visuals, songs, and games—helped children learn Spanish. Parents, however, made no mention of approval or disapproval of methods used. Instead, for example, many indicated surprise that their child could demonstrate having learned so many Spanish words—a direct result of the methodology used. The differences in perspectives and the open-endedness of the questions may explain why the categories vary across the three sources.

As mentioned earlier, for the preliminary reading of the student journals, the researcher used the transcriptions of those journals; the preliminary reading did not acknowledge the children's drawings. Furthermore, as the researcher coded the transcriptions in the preliminary reading, each and every lesson was considered. Because some introductory lessons reintroduced students to learning Spanish (the previous semester they had been learning French) and because several lessons reviewed previously introduced concepts, not all lessons introduced new or additional information about Yucatán's culture or gave students opportunities to make connections to other curricular learning in their classrooms. Therefore, the researcher needed a data reduction process.

Content Analysis of Student Journals

Selection of Key Questions

The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) are the basis for the evaluation of evidence in this study. Keeping in mind the foreign language goals of

Connections and Cultures and the standards related to these goals, the researcher determined which of the more than twenty journal entries would most likely reveal evidence of these standards. The eight questions selected for analysis are highlighted in italics in Appendix D with a brief synopsis of the lesson that accompanies each question.

Development of Response Matrix

To make content analysis of the journals uniform in format, the researcher set up a matrix using a spreadsheet (Appendix E). While using the student journal note cards as a guide, she identified two to five key words or phrases for each of the eight open-ended questions that were then listed on the matrix for that lesson. Next, the researcher reread the journals of all students for the first question and began the process of identifying mentions by the students that indicated evidence of making connections or of awareness of cultural differences or similarities. On the matrix the researcher listed students according to teacher, assigning "A" to the students of one teacher and "B" to the other. Students were randomly numbered according to teacher.

The researcher recorded each collection of observations of a particular key word, phrase or idea as one point on the matrix. For example, a student's observation of Tinum's palm leaf houses was recorded as one point regardless of the frequency of that student's mention of Tinum's palm leaf houses in a particular journal entry. This procedure was applied to the student's written observations as well as his or her drawings, which also were considered as evidence of learning. In other words, a picture of Tinum's palm leaf houses accompanying a written description of the palm leaf houses was recorded by the researcher as a single point on the matrix.

Teacher Involvement in Journaling

The first teacher focus group was the journal focus group was comprised of teachers who had participated in the Spanish class student journals. This group revealed interesting information about the level of involvement of each of the teachers throughout the journal writing. Teacher B had spent at least five extra minutes with her students during journal writing after each Spanish class. During this time, she endeavored to have her students practice good writing skills by checking to see if they had used capital letters and had expressed thoughts in complete sentences. She explained her involvement in this way during the focus group meeting:

> "I felt that's what second graders needed to key in on. I would check to make sure they had capitals and periods just to make sure they made sense. . .So I was doing English skills along with their journal so I could incorporate that and not feel like I was wasting time. . .Some teachers say, 'Oh, I need to teach this and I need to teach that.' Some teachers might feel they'd be wasting time, but [not me]."

Teacher B read each of the students' journals and was quite familiar with the content of their answers. This level of involvement meant that she was much more knowledgeable than the other teachers about the taught curriculum. This knowledge is evident in the focus group content analysis when her comments are compared with those of the other four members of that first focus group. It is interesting to contrast the involvement of Teacher B with that of the involvement of Teacher A. For example, during the focus group Teacher A stated: "I wasn't listening [to the lesson] so I couldn't tell them what to write. It [the journal writing process] reinforced what they had done in the lesson."

A tabulation of the number of student references to key themes on the matrix, however, reveals that the different levels of involvement on the part of the classroom teacher during the writing of the journals did not change the number of student references for that class. Both groups made approximately the same types and number of observations in response to each question. It is important to note that this study does not analyze the quality of student writing skills; it does, however, analyze the quality of the responses through tabulation of the various references to key themes noted in the matrix.

Analysis of Student Responses

According to informal discussions with teachers, students were given at least 15 minutes to express their observations in written and visual form. Participating teachers indicated in the focus group that they encouraged students to write first and draw later. Thus, the amount of time students had to draw varied, and the quality of the drawings varied considerably from student to student. Although the drawings were visually descriptive of the taught lessons, not all drawings were descriptive of the lesson content and, therefore, did not clarify the student's understanding of content. For example, sometimes students would draw a picture of themselves or a classmate participating in a classroom activity. Sometimes students had time to add color to their drawing, but other drawings appeared unfinished.

The researcher considered two basic criteria in categorizing a drawing as evidence of learning. First, the researcher considered only those student drawings that obviously portrayed images unique to Yucatán. Secondly, the drawing also needed to give evidence of learning in response to the question for that journal entry. In some cases, a child's

drawing was the only indication of their learning; in other cases a child's drawing supplemented written evidence of their learning. In any case, only one point was marked on the matrix for evidence of learning through written response, drawing, or both.

The three figures included here illustrate some aspect unique to the student's imaginary trip to Yucatán. Figure 1 shows a student's recollection of the class arriving at the airport with palm trees and a hot sun to welcome everyone. In Figure 2 the student's drawing shows the differences between a house in Tinum (on the right) and in Mérida (on the left). In Figure 3, a student remembers a countryside scene with a palm leaf house, a windmill, and a farm animal. Each drawing has some aspect, however small, unique to Yucatán.

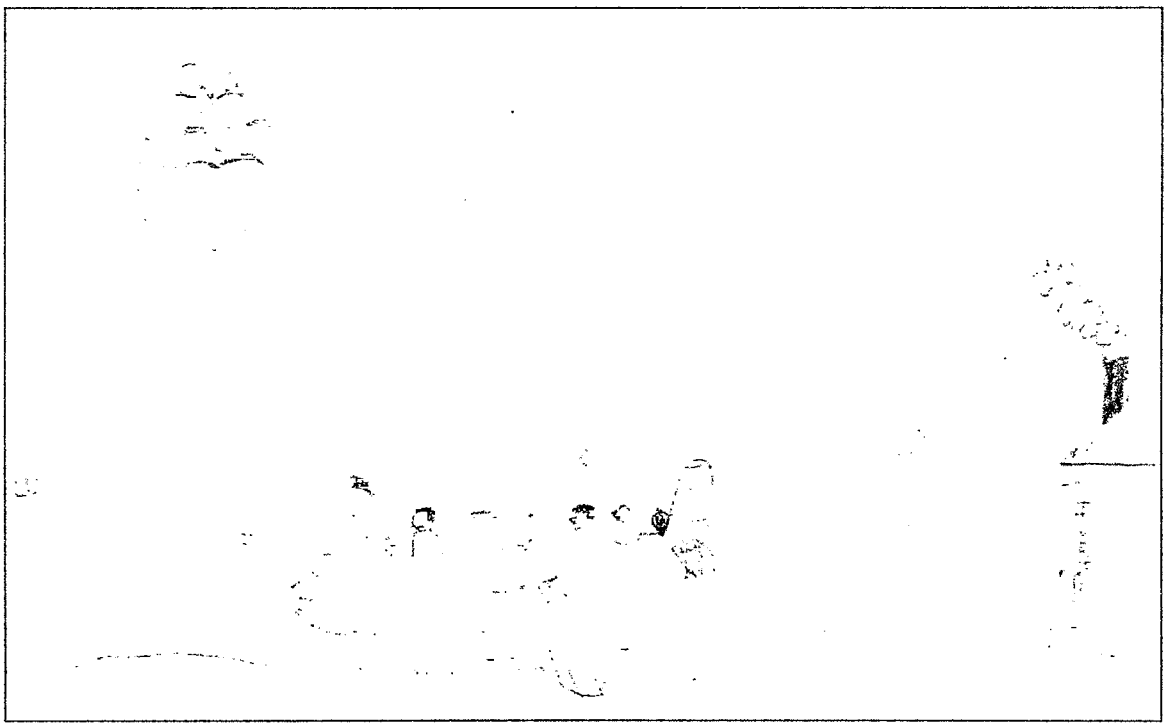


Figure 1. Arrival in Yucatán

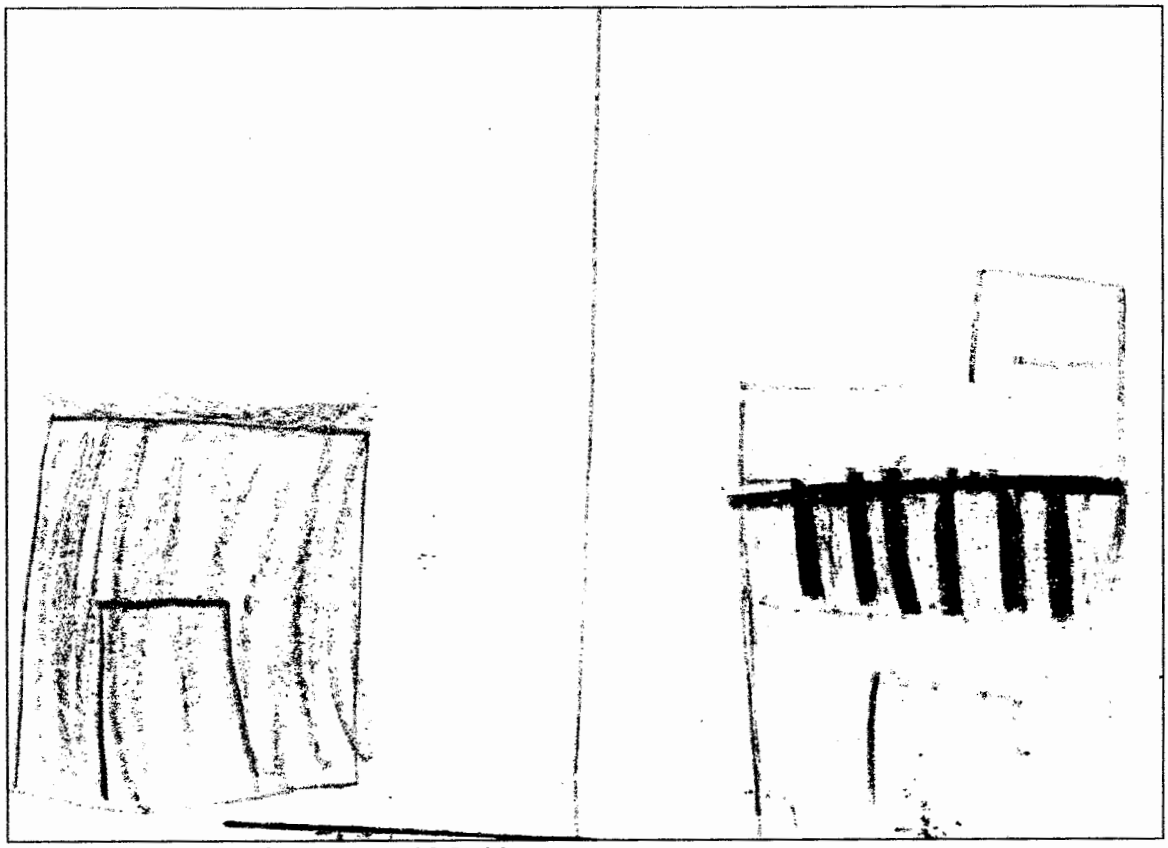


Figure 2. Houses of Tinum and Mérida

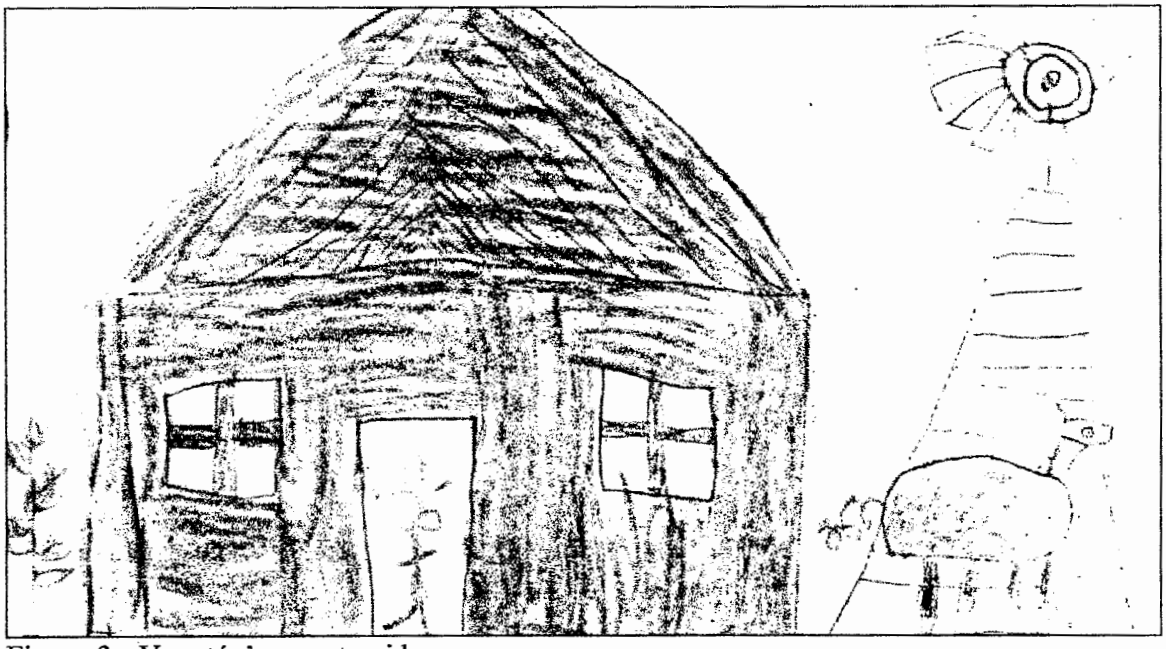


Figure 3. Yucatán's countryside

Content Analysis Results

In analyzing the student journal matrix, the researcher reviewed data for each of the eight questions in two ways. First and most importantly, she calculated the frequency of significant student observations in response to each lesson's question. Student observations were defined according to the key words, phrases, and/or ideas indicated by the categories of the matrix. The frequency of student responses in each category was then tabulated.

Analysis of Responses to Question 1

This lesson occurred two class periods after the students' imaginary airplane took them from Iowa to Yucatan. Prior to this lesson students had been introduced to differences in Yucatán's weather as compared to Iowa. The students had also located on the map of North America the states of Iowa and Yucatán and the Gulf of Mexico. In this particular lesson students view large photosgraphs of houses comparing the capital city, Mérida, with a small village, Tinum. The students learned how different the houses in Tinum appear because their roofs are made of palm leaves. A flashcard showing a palm tree helped explain the types of roofs in Tinum.

The journal question reads as follows: *Mérida is a large city and Tinum is a small town in Yucatan. What did you notice about the houses in those places?* The teacher-researcher might answer this question as follows: "As compared to the houses of Iowa and of Mérida, the capital of Yucatan, the houses of Tinum appear to be very different Tinum's houses are smaller and have palm leaf roofs." However, since this journal question is open-ended, as are all of the other questions in the student journal, the

responses from the children varied greatly. The categories listed on the matrix are (a) Tinum houses: small/different, (b) Tinum houses: stick/palm leaf, (c) Mérida/Tinum houses compared, (d) Yucatán/Iowa houses compared, and (d) other. The category, other, was included for all eight selected questions in case a student's response did not fit any of the listed categories on the matrix. The inclusion of "other" ensured that tabulation would reveal appropriateness of the categories chosen for each question.

From this lesson 31% of the students noted at least one characteristic and 51% mentioned two characteristics within the categories listed on the matrix. Ten percent made observations of all four characteristics while only 7% expressed none of these aspects. The most frequently mentioned aspect of the photographs observed by children was that Tinum's houses are made of sticks and/or have palm leaf roofs; the next most frequently mentioned was that the roofs of the houses in Mérida appear quite different from those of Tinum. All samples of entries illustrating student learning of these concepts in written and visual form for each question are found in Appendix H.

> Journal 11—tary wr made ot ov lives. it was hot! the tepter was 90. tary war sort hoses. (There were made out of leaves. It was hot! The temperature was 90. There were short houses.)

> Journal 44—Tinum the rafs wer mad from pomtree In Merida the rofs wer flat. (Tinum the roofs were made from palm trees. In Mérida the roofs were flat.)

The use of inventive spelling is a whole language approach to teaching writing that primary grade teachers commonly encourage students to use as early as kindergarten. Journal writing provides individual students the opportunity to demonstrate transfer of phonemic awareness and writing skills taught and modeled for them during whole group instruction periods.

Analysis of Responses to Question 2

This lesson immediately follows the lesson on differences in houses in Yucatán. The children reviewed with maps the locations of Yucatán, the Gulf of Mexico, Mérida, and Tinum. They are introduced to the pyramid at Chichen Itzá with flashcard photographs. Using a time-out signal, the Spanish teacher uses English to ask who in the class can explain the meaning of the words *ancient.* After a brief discussion in English, students decide that the pyramid at Chichen is ancient. Using Spanish again, the teacher reviews additional flashcards of names for places discussed in previous lessons. The journal question for this lesson asks: *Here are some names of places in Yucatán. What can you tell me about each of them?: Chichen Itzá, Mérida, Tinum, and el Golfo de México.* The categories on the matrix are (a) Chichen Itzá: large/ancient, (b) Gulf of Mexico: ocean/flamingos, (c) Tinum's houses: palm leaves, and (d) other.

Analysis of the students' entries revealed that 34% noted characteristics of at least one geographical/historical site, and nearly 40% of the students observed and noted some aspect of at least two of the four sites introduced to them on their imaginary trip. Students were most impressed with Chichen Itzá (66%), but equal numbers of students commented on the palm leaf houses of Tinum (37%) and the Gulf of Mexico (37%). Six of the forty-one students' entries (15%) made no significant observations on any of the four locations that had been discussed in class. In order for a student response to categorized as positive, a student needed to recall some aspect of one of those sites. Sample student entries follow.

> Journal 40—Chichen itza is a tall bilking it has over 90 steps. El golfo de mexico is a big sea. Tinum si the plase that has pom tree leves for a rowv. (Chichen Itza is a tall building. It has over 90 steps. El golfo de Mexico is a big sea. Tinum is the place that has palm tree leaves for a roof).
>
> Journal 5—Chichen itza is a pyramid flamingos live in the Golfo de Mexico. (Chichen Itzá is a pyramid. Flamingos live in the Golfo de México).

Analysis of Responses to Question 3

This lesson focuses on the differences that can be observed in the respective countrysides of Iowa and Yucatán. Flashcard photographs showed students that Yucatán's soil is very rocky and flat in comparison with a photo of Iowa that shows hilly, green topography. Another point of the lesson's discussion (ongoing since the students' arrival in Yucatán) concerns the comparisons of temperatures for the same time of the year in Iowa and Yucatán. At the beginning of each lesson since their imaginary arrival in Yucatán the students have compared the weather using a song.

The question pertaining to this topographic and meteorological lesson follows: *Today we pretended to visit the countryside. What do you notice about the countryside in Yucatán? Is it the same or different from the countryside in Iowa?* The categories on the matrix are (a) countryside: different topographies, (b) countryside: different weather, and (c) other.

A total of 78% of the students made at least one visual or written comment about differences in the countryside of Iowa and Yucatán, while 22% of the students made no notable observations of any kind. Although the question did not ask specifically for them to comment about the weather, students compared Iowa and Yucatán on that subject with

somewhat greater frequency (61%) than those who commented on the differences in topography (56%).

> Journal 4—Are sate was hilee and Yucatan's wa samithe In Iowa the waher was farsw. In Yukata the wahar wa calor. (Our state was hilly and Yucatán's was smooth. In Iowa weather was *fresco* (cool). In Yucatán the weather was *calor* [hot]).
>
> Journal 49—In Yucatan it is hot. It is so hot peolp tak a lot of water. It is flat in Yucatan. (In Yucatán it is hot. It is so hot people take a lot of water. It is flat in Yucatan.

Analysis of Responses to Question 4

While questions three and four are basically the same—*Tell about our pretend visit to the countryside in Yucatán. What did you see and do in Spanish class today?*—the lesson presentation was quite different. In these lessons students viewed authentic slides of Yucatán's countryside that included pictures of houses in Tinum, of animals in the village, of a village farmer growing corn (in the rocky soil), and of tortilla preparation. In showing the slides, the teacher-researcher was able to review vocabulary and concepts while giving students a multi-faceted view of Yucatán's countryside. The categories on the matrix are (a) countryside: tortillas, (b) countryside: grow corn, (c) countryside: houses, (d) countryside: animals, (e) countryside: other.

Nearly half (44%) of all the students made at least one significant observation to this lesson's question. Seeing the ambience surrounding the village houses with large as life pictures impressed many children. Only 10% made no visual or written comment at all, but 46% made two or more comments in one of the four categories on the matrix. The children continued to show great interest in the palm leaf houses of the village. A

total of 54% wrote about or drew houses of Tinum. All the journal 37% mentioned hearing or seeing animals of Yucatán's countryside.

> Journal 8—I saw cone and I saw a different house then Iowa. and I saw a got a pig. (I saw corn and I saw a different house than Iowa. And I saw a goat and a pig.)
>
> Journal 46—Pepole grow corn in Yucatan. Pepole grow corn in Iowa too. (People grow corn in Yucatán. People grow corn in Iowa too.)
>
> Journal 9—We saw a bach of car an we saw a lot of Hases. an we saw a bach of anamales. (We saw a bunch of corn and we saw a lot of houses. And we saw a bunch of animals.)

Analysis of Responses to Question 5

Up until this point the focus of the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum has centered on helping students make connections to social studies (life in ancient Yucatán and in Yucatán today) and science (comparisons of weather). Students had been learning Spanish words for colors, weather, actions, and numbers while making these connections. A variety of activities such as singing, playing games, viewing pictures, talking to a Yucatecan puppet, *Señor Tucán*, and performing actions at his request had fostered their learning of Spanish. In lesson 16, however, the focus of the curriculum changes. In this and successive lessons, the students began to make comparisons about the cultures of Iowa and Yucatán through lessons about celebrations that are unique to Yucatán.

For this particular lesson, students have listened to the Spanish teacher read and discuss with them a book entitled *Mi Cumpleaños* (Torres, 1994). The objective of the lesson is to focus on how birthdays are celebrated similarly or differently in Mexico in comparison with Iowa. Thus their journal entry must respond to the following question: *How is a birthday in Iowa different from a birthday in Yucatán? How is it the same?*

The matrix categories are (a) Iowa/Yucatán birthdays: similar, (b) Iowa/Yucatán birthdays: different, (c) Yucatán: piñata/game, (d) other.

More than 78% of the students mentioned at least one response in answering this question. Of students making comparisons, 14% determined that birthdays in Iowa and Yucatán are similar as well as different. For the category that indicates similarities between Iowa and Yucatán birthdays, 59% of the students noticed some aspect of birthday celebrations that both states share.

> Journal 12—They both have Birthday brases. They both have cakes. They both sing. in Youctian they think binyte is a game. in Iowa it a fun game. (They both have birthday presents. They both have cakes. They both sing. In Yucatán they think piñata is a game. In Iowa it is a fun game.)
>
> Journal 34—Today in america they don't youculee youes pinyotes in yuackatan youesis pinyoteas. (Today in America they don't usually use piñatas in Yucatán uses piñatas.)

Analysis of Responses to Question 6

The researcher-teacher taught the concept of the Posada celebration during four separate lessons. Because Iowa has no comparable celebration, students needed several lessons to gain familiarity with the characteristics of a Posada. The researcher planned three different journal entries for collection of their reflections. In addition, the researcher planned a new lesson that would give students additional exposure to the concept of what a Posada is.

As an introduction to the Posadas, the teacher showed students a mini-drama of Yucatecan families going from house to house in search of a Posada. This celebration recalls Mary and Joseph's search for shelter before the birth of Christ. The mini-drama uses toy little people (the Yucatecans) and milk cartons (the houses) for props. While

religious aspects of this celebration are introduced in this lesson, the researcher intended for students to focus upon the sense of community that the Posadas engender. The journal entry for that lesson asks the following information: *Tell how the birthday celebration and a Posada celebration are different in Yucatán.* The researcher found that while a few students were able to make comparisons, most were not yet ready to do so in their writing.

The second lesson the teacher presented to reinforce the Posada concept involved the reading of a story entitled *Nine Days to Christmas* (Ets & Labastida, 1959). The teacher told the story to the students using slides. This method allowed the students to focus on the visuals. Also the teacher could then simplify the narration of the original storyline to maintain use of the target language. In their journal entry the students needed to recall the story—a young girl and her family preparing for and celebrating a Posada. The question asked: *Tell me about Ceci's first Posada party. Tell what a Posada is. Tell when a Posada is celebrated.* Many student responses remarked about the beautiful piñata Ceci (the story's main character) and her mother purchased at the market.

The third Posada lesson which immediately preceded the actual classroom Posada role-play used transparencies of Mérida-style houses to review and practice a simple dialogue. The question for this lesson follows: *What's a Posada party?*

In the fourth Posada lesson the students role-played the Posada celebration. All students participated. Volunteers held up three different Tinum-style houses with doors while the teacher lead the rest of the class from house to house. By this time, most students could participate orally at least minimally in the Posada dialogue. For that

particular journal entry student responded to the following question—*Tell about our Posada celebration today. What was it like? What did we do?* A tabulation of student observations revealed that the primary student comment was how much they enjoyed the hot chocolate and buñuelos! If the researcher had chosen only that entry and disregarded the entries written for the preparatory lessons, valuable student observations would have been overlooked in the data conclusions.

The process of discovery that occurred throughout the progression of these lessons points to a very important facet of teacher action research—documentation and reflection of potential improvements in research or assessment design. In retrospect, the researcher should have waited until the third Posada lesson to pose the first Posada question. In addition, the third question following the classroom role-play should have been rephrased to ask, "Today we ended our Posada celebration with hot chocolate and buñuelos. What else can you tell me about our Posada?"

Assessment questions that are age-appropriate and well thought out help the student as well as the teacher. Because the questions for this theme were ill-timed (and in the case of question three, written poorly), the researcher chose to compile each student's observations from all four different Posada entries. The matrix lists two categories for this theme. The first category in the matrix actually includes three distinctly important characteristics of Posadas—A Posada is a Yucatecan procession that role-plays Joseph and Mary's search for shelter before Christmas during the month of December. The second category records student recollection that a piñata party is a characteristic of a Posada.

Although students may have recalled multiple times any one of those characteristics, the researcher recorded only one response for either category. From all entries, 20% recalled at least one major characteristic of the Posada celebration. At least two of the categories listed in the matrix were noted by 71% of the students. Only two of the 41 student entries (5%) mentioned neither category. Upon reviewing the total number of responses for each of the two categories, it is evident that the same number of students recalled at least one characteristic for each category.

> Journal 39—*Tell how the birthday celebration and the Posada celebration are different in Yucatán.* they nok at the doers in Yucatan. they berak pinyatas at cristmis. they have diff thains to do on Crisms. ([For the Posada] they knock on the doors in Yucatán. They break piñatas at Christmas. They have different things to do on Christmas.)
>
> Journal 13—*Tell me about Ceci's first Posada party. Tell what a Posada is. Tell when a Posada is celebrated.* its salabrad on cissmos and its salabrad on brthas ot. ([The piñata] is celebrated at Christmas. It is celebrated at birthdays too.)
>
> Journal 2—*What's a posada party?* there was two pepale and they were looking for a place to stay so they went to two housees and the thierd one they went to was the one with the pinyata and the fiesta. (There was two people and they were looking for a place to stay so they went to two houses and the third one they went to was the one with the piñata and the fiesta.)

Analysis of Responses to Question 7

After the lessons on the theme of Yucatecan celebrations, the last few lessons before returning Iowa reviewed Spanish vocabulary from previous lessons and continued to practice actions for making tortillas and for the Mexican folksong, *De Colores.* Throughout the unit, students have gained practice in using and recording information on a month by month comparative weather chart. Students have learned to compare the weather of Yucatán and Iowa for the months of September, January, March, April, and

May. Students have learned that spring in Yucatán is different from Iowa with regard to temperature and precipitation. Question seven asks: *Our pretend trip to Yucatán is almost over. When you really visit Yucatán, what would be your favorite month? Tell why. It might help to look at your weather chart.* The matrix categories for this question read (a) visit: birthday, (b) visit: in spring, (c) visit: in winter, (d) visit: compare temperatures, (e) visit: other. Category "d" gave evidence of students making a comparison of the weather for Iowa and Yucatán or within Yucatán.

Because students had their comparative weather chart at hand, it was easy for students to justify their choice of month based on what they had learned about how different the weather of Yucatán is compared to Iowa. Interestingly, however, some students justified their choice of month according to when they celebrate their birthday. Addition of the fourth category—compare the weather—was needed to indicate the number of students who were actually making valuable comparisons about weather for Iowa and Yucatán.

The matrix shows that 18% responded with one observation, while only 5% made no observations whatsoever. More than 56% of the student entries justified their choice for the time of year that they would choose for their return to Yucatán; that is, their answers fit into two categories. Sometimes a student chose more than one month to visit. The percentage of students giving responses that fit into in three categories was 15%. The majority of all responses, however, fell under the category in which students demonstrated the ability to compare the weather for Yucatan and Iowa or within Yucatán (79%). The next most frequently mentioned category—I would return to Yucatán in the

spring—is notable because of the extremely hot weather Yucatán experiences during this time. More than half (50%) of the students responded in this category.

> Journal 16—Novebrei because it's my birthday and it's mucho calor. (November because it's my birthday and it's *mucho calor* [hot]).
>
> Journal 39—I want to go to Yucatan in abril beac I have a Brthday and I wood moek wat a Brthday in Yucatan. (I want to go to Yucatán in abril because I have a birthday [in April] and I would make want a birthday in Yucatan.)
>
> Journal 43—I like January because it is hot and like hot plasis too. and anuther mounth is mayo beceuse it is so hot I like it. (I like January because it is hot and I like hot places. And another month is mayo because it is so hot I like it.)

Analysis of Responses to Question 8

The last question is not related to any specific lesson. Rather, the objective of this open-ended question is to give students an opportunity to reflect on their experiences during the semester. The question asked for the following reflection: *You are ready to tell your friends about your trip to Yucatán. What was the best part of your trip? Tell why.* The matrix listed three possible categories: Back? (a) ...Yes, the weather, (b) ...No, too hot, (c) ...Yes, good to compare, and (d) other. The preliminary reading indicated that many students would return because of the weather or because they enjoyed learning about the differences between Iowa and Yucatán. Some of the students indicated they would not want to return; in most cases the reason they gave was dislike for the hot weather. Several students gave a variety of reasons that did not fit in any category.

For this question, 75% gave only one justification for their decision to return to Yucatán. Therefore, the researcher looked at the totals for each category rather than the frequencies of responses. Seventeen percent of the students elected not to return to

Yucatán because of the weather while 31% stated the opposite. More than half of the students (53%) stated in various ways that they would return because they appreciated (in one form or another) having had an opportunity to learn about a different culture.

> Journal 33—I would like to go to Yucatan because it is hot there and I like hot plases. I think the best part is when we did math because I like math.

> Journal 52—Yes, I would lik to go back becas it it mowchesemoclowr. The best part was the food. I will show you wate they look like. P.S. I like you. do carits gerow in Yucaton? (Yes, I would like to go back because it is *muchísimo calor* [very hot]. The best part was the food. I will show you what they look like. P.S. I like you. Do carrots grow in Yucatán?)

Analysis of Responses to Question 9—An Unanticipated Category

During a review of drawings for one of the earlier questions, the researcher realized that a category to evaluate demonstration of the Mayan number system should have been included. On two different journal pages many students did, in fact, demonstrate their understanding of how the ancient Mayans counted and recorded numerical quantities up to nineteen. Unfortunately, however, the questions designed to set the scenario for that demonstration of learning were not well designed.

In order to understand the basics of Mayan counting up to nineteen, students must understand the concept of counting by fives. Some teachers refer to this as skip counting. On two different occasions in the student journal, the researcher asked student to demonstrate their understanding of Mayan numbers. The first request was open-ended: *Here is a list of numbers. Draw or tell how to form some of the ancient numbers from Chichen Itzá.* Unfortunately for the researcher and the students, the question required students to perform two completely different activities for this entry (draw and tell) and gave them only fifteen minutes time to complete those two activities.

The second opportunity for demonstration of their learning on this topic asked students the following: *Describe in English or Spanish how to write an ancient number from Chichen Itzá. Here are some words you will need.* Below the question the researcher-teacher listed words for numbers up to fifteen in Spanish along with the Spanish words for rectangle and circle because those were the words the teacher had been using to describe the Mayan numerals to students. Again, the question asked for too much in too little time.

To describe the formation of the Mayan numerals in English might have been possible, but very few students attempted. Instead for both questions, the students took it upon themselves to figure out their own way to demonstrate their understanding. Almost half, 46% of the students, drew in sequence the Mayan numerals up to nineteen. Many of those attempts tried to continue farther with larger numerals, but those attempts were incorrect because of the way the Mayan system works. Their system of counting is based on the number 20. A few students also demonstrated their learning by labeling Mayan numerals with the Arabic numeral. Most notable, however, is the fact that 41% of the students did not attempt to demonstrate their learning because of poorly designed questions. Only 5% of the students used written expression exclusively to explain Mayan numerals, and only 7% used both written expression and drawing combined.

The examples below show the creative ways that students demonstrated their learning despite the fact that the questions were poorly written. One student used writing and drawing to make a direct link from word to Mayan numeral. Another student tried to do a math story problem and almost got a correct answer. A third student tried to go

beyond the learning in the classroom and made some educated guesses based on what she already knows in addition to writing a clear description of the Spanish classroom activity.

> Journal 29—(The number 0 in spanish is this . The number 5 is This. The number 9 is This . The number 15 is This . (To connect the writing and the drawing the student simply drew a line from the sentence to the correct Mayan numeral she had drawn above.)
>
> Journal 9—Jeremy has dose [twelve] pans and I have cato (fourteen) an How mane is it (The student drew the Mayan numeral for seventeen. Perhaps what he intended to do is add the numbers dos [two] and catorce [fourteen] to equal sixteen instead of seventeen.)
>
> Journal 33—In Spanish we learned chichen ItZa nubers and she put us in grops of four and we had to think about haw to make chichen ItZa nubers. (In Spanish we learned Chichen Itzá numbers and she put us in groups of four and we had to think about how to make Chichen Itzá numbers.)

There are a variety of ways to improve the questions as can be deduced for the manner in which these students answered. For the first journal entry, rather than give students the opportunity to choose either writing or drawing, the researcher-teacher should perhaps have labeled certain Arabic numerals with Spanish words. Then it would have been possible to ask students to form the Mayan number that would match the Spanish number.

For the second journal entry, an alternative activity might be to ask the students to draw certain Mayan numerals. Then it would be possible to have students match the Mayan numeral with a Spanish word from a list of Spanish number words out of order. The researcher's experience with these poorly designed journal entries points to the value of making sure the directions are clear and simple enough in order to provide maximum opportunity for the demonstration of learning by all students.

Student Response Conclusions

Analysis of the student journal responses, the centerpiece of this research, gives ample evidence of learning related to the two goals of Cultures and Connections. A key goal of this thematic unit is for students to gain knowledge of and better understand other cultures. Analysis of student responses shows evidence of students having learned about similarities and differences between Iowa and Yucatecan birthday celebrations and about having experienced a Christmas celebration unique to Yucatán. Students can identify several products of Yucatán's culture—tortilla, piñata, palm leaf house, Chichen Itzá and the Posada celebration.

An additional goal of the unit is to help students make connections with other disciplines and acquire information while learning Spanish. Student responses show that they have compared types of houses, topography, and weather in Yucatán with their home state, Iowa. They can identify locations within Yucatán, Mexico. They have demonstrated an understanding of ancient counting system of the Maya from zero to twenty.

As an alternative assessment tool, the dialogue journal for obtaining direct information from the student is obviously very useful. The evidence gained from review and analysis, however, also points to the value of the dialogue journal as an alternative assessment in another way. For example, students who wanted to write about and give evidence of their learning of Mayan counting did so in a variety of ways even though the questions were not well written. This finding shows evidence of the dialogue journal giving students an opportunity to use higher thinking skills as well as direct evidence of their own unique learning and perspective on what was taught.

Teacher Focus Group Analysis

The National Foreign Language Standards (1996) should be the measure by which a determination is made as to whether or not the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum is of value in teaching about Cultures and in making Connections. The analysis of the student journals substantiates evidence of learning of the standards as analyzed by the teacher-researcher. The research design of this study proposed analysis of two additional sources of information that might substantiate learning of the standards through the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum.

A discussion of ancillary evidence begins with analysis of the two separate teacher focus groups conducted less than one month after the students' semester of Spanish ended. A moderator led the discussion that asked teachers to contribute information as to whether or not they had observed in their students any evidence of making connections to the elementary classroom curriculum or in learning about Mexico's culture through the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum. The moderator asked two basic questions of each teacher focus groups: (a) What did you observe in your students that provided evidence of knowledge about and understanding of Mexican culture, and in particular, Yucatán's culture? and (b) What evidence of student learning did you observe in them making connections between the second grade Spanish curriculum and other content areas?

Krueger's guidelines for effective focus group analysis recommend that the analysis be verifiable, focused and practical (1994). Tapescripts, session notes and

transcripts exist for each of the focus groups in this study. A follow-up discussion with the moderator revealed only one caution in particular regarding validity of results.

During each of the focus group sessions, the moderator encouraged the teachers to share any negative comments they might have regarding their students' learning of the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum. For the most part, however, any negative comments they shared pertained to negative aspects of the elementary foreign language program—shortness of instructional time or the switching of languages. Students spend half the year learning Spanish; the other half of the year they learn French. Those expressed concerns are not within the realm of influence of the curriculum itself. The researcher acknowledges the limitations of the validity of this study both in terms of the selection of the teachers for the focus group and in the participation of the researcher as teacher. All teachers selected for participation in the journal project as well as the focus groups have indicated to the researcher their support of the elementary foreign language program.

The basic difference among group members for each focus group concerns their involvement with and knowledge of the Spanish student journal project. All members of the journal focus group had participated in this study's student journal project or in a previous student journal projects with the pilot study. None of the members of the non-journal focus group had participated at any time in the student journal aspect of the project. All members of both focus group teachers have been teachers of second grade for several years and as such are familiar with the second grade Spanish curriculum.

The researcher set up a new matrix (Appendix E) for analysis of the focus groups because the comments of the teachers were less detailed and less content focused than the

student journal evidence. As compared to the matrix data from the student journals, the matrix data for the focus groups provided less detail about the Yucatán curriculum content. While teachers tended to identify evidence of student learning rather than criticism of it, the comments addressed varied topics rather than focusing on any particular topic.

The nature of focus group is to generate discussion, and for that reason focus group analysis looks for consensus or dissonance throughout the members' discussion of the proposed topics (US Department of Transportation, 1994). The researcher found it helpful to analyze the focus group transcripts uing a combination of ethnographic summary and content analysis. According to Morgan, the ethnographic approach relies on quotes from members while the content analysis produces numerical descriptions of the data (Morgan, 1988).

The categories or themes mentioned by the teachers do not necessarily coincide with those evidenced through the student journals since the latter were focused on questions related to current curriculum content. It is notable, however, that evidence of the standards of Cultures and Connections most evident in the discussion in the teacher focus groups are also the standards apparent through the student journal. The matrix reveals remarkably similar observations by members of both groups. In fact, teacher focus group members who had not participated in the student journal activity mentioned at least as many pertinent comments as the group of teachers who had worked with the student journal project. There was, however, one journal focus group teacher who knew more details about the curriculum than any of the other teachers. According to her

comments, it appears that her understanding is due to her involvement with the student journals in proofreading each journal for grade appropriate writing skills transfer.

Making Connections and Awareness of Cultures in the *Fiestas de Yucatán* Unit

Comments from the two focus groups are designated by an identifying number and letter. For example, 1J is used to designate a teacher within the journal focus group, and 2N designates a teacher within the non-journal focus group. As mentioned earlier, students of all of the teachers had experienced the second grade *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum.

The teachers also agreed that the curriculum fosters greater cultural awareness of practices, products, and perspectives different from students' own and greater awareness of the existence of languages other than English and, related to that topic.

> 1J: They wanted to do it [journal writing] in Spanish. They had a better concept of what a different language is. They would come up to me and say [for their journal writing] "How do you say such and such in Spanish?" Students became more aware that we just don't speak English in the world.
>
> 1N: It's good that the kids have been exposed to a different culture.
>
> 2J: I think symbols of the country, like the flag they were able to recognize. And knowing that tortilla is something that is kind of a staple food of Mexico. I mean when she made those in class I think that was really good for them to get to taste the tortillas and really experience that first hand.

This cultural awareness was also mentioned by teachers as they discussed their students when they applied their learning to their literature class.

> 2U: It [the story] was about a birthday. They [Spanish class] talked about celebrations so we compared that ot other celebrations the Mexicans had versus our culture and how we celebrate birthdays.

> 2S: Last week we read the story of Roberto and there were a lot of Spanish words...they did a nice job of being able to repeat the words in Spanish...And they knew that this was not an English word, that it was a Spanish word.

Teachers from both groups agreed that they have observed through the Spanish class that students make valuable connections to the curricular areas of literature, science, math, and social studies. The following comments address observations of students making connections in the content area of social studies in general and then in the area of map skills.

> 2K: Well, I noticed an understanding through my kids when I was teaching about Mexico and they were able to make the connection that Jeanette had taught in the time that she was with my students and then what I had been teaching them about Mexican culture.

> 2C: I would agree with 2K. When I taught Mexico in social studies, if I would put up a map of Mexico the would say, "There is the Yucatán!" or "There is where Chichen Itzá is," which is exciting to see. . .I think the kids really enjoy seeing real photographs of Jeanette in these places in Yucatán and then comparing. . .[Jeanette] She would say in Spanish, "Students, look at the picture here." And they can see her making the tortillas and then talk about what we do in the United States.

The following two teachers discussed how their students made connections science through comparisons of weather in Iowa and Mexico.

> 2J: I think they have a good understanding of the climate in Mexico [Yucatán]. She did something with the weather. . .I think they got a real good feel for what the temperature is like there.

> 2C: They were able to do it kind of comparing and contrasting the chart during the different months between here and there. And they were able to do that pretty much on their own.

Teachers from both groups also mentioned the connections students made in the learning of the ancient counting system of the Maya.

1D: They had to know math skills for what she was doing. . .and relate that to adding. A bar was five and a dot was one.

2C: I think she taught them a system of counting—bars stood for five and dots for one. Our kids really kind of connected with that for place value that they were counting by fives. . ..

Value of the Methodology used in the *Fiestas de Yucatán* Unit

Teachers from both groups commented on the use of the target language, hands-on activities, and techniques that make the experience successful for all students.

1J: She does use Spanish exclusively. It's amazing what they understand as a result.

1L: And she uses a lot of gestures.

1D: She's involved the children in every single lesson she's even given. The children are always doing something...a song, a game, an activity in front of the class. . .It's very important in second grade that they are learning and not just sitting there listening.

2U: I just think they are so quick to pick it up. I mean from just the hands-on things that she does and the visuals that she uses....

Consensus and Dissonance from the Participating Journal Teachers

The teachers who had participated in the journal writing did reveal a divergence of opinions on two issues. The first is the use of time for the Spanish class and journaling after Spanish class. The teachers disagreed as to the value of taking time out of the school day for Spanish journals. The second divergence of opinion concerned the perception by journal teachers that collaboration with the Spanish teacher in order to integrate grade level curriculum is a worthwhile endeavor in terms of being potentially successful given the limited amount of instructional time for Spanish.

1M: Classroom teachers don't know the language so how can we support each other [in integrating content from other disciplines].

1J: If they're just getting it in English (math concepts, for example) it would be too hard for them to transfer it into Spanish.

1D: She's real good about maps. My kids didn't even know where Yucatán was. She showed them where the cities were like Mérida, and Chichen Itzá is, and where the sea was. That really helps when we're [the classroom teacher] introducing them to maps that they've had those skills ahead of time. Now 2K is doing maps and it seems to be easier...You can [also] incorporate [English writing skills] into their journal writing.

1M: We don't have enough time to teach what we're supposed to, what we're required to teach in many ways. So to add this curriculum [Spanish] in, then we're taking away from something else. It's a trade-off. Because we don't have enough time to do what we're supposed to do. We seem to add and add and add. And we never take anything out.
1D: So you just have to focus on what you think is important, and go from there, right?

1M: But if we think about the world that these kids are going to live in, it's a necessity. They're got to understand more about other languages and cultures.

There was consensus among the teachers as to the use of the dialogue journal as an alternative assessment for second grade students. Their comments indicate that journal writing is an activity that teachers can tailor to all student's learning levels.

1L: I adapted that [letting students express themselves in drawings] to the kids who I knew couldn't write sentences. I said, "Just draw a picture for her"...And then [when] I knew my kids were more capable, then [I said], "Yes, you write sentences."

1D: And it depended on the child, too. Like, if it was a special ed child, a picture is fine. But if it is a regular child, I expected two sentences. And if it was one of my top students, I expected a page full. So it just depends, you know, on what your expectations were for the child.

Parent Questionnaire Analysis

The parent questionnaires (Appendix F) are the third source of data. The researcher used the matrix of the student journal data and deleted that data to create a new

matrix (Appendix G) for parent questionnaires. The researcher then reviewed the parent questionnaires in the same manner as data was reviewed for the student journals. By using the same categories, data from the two sources could be directly compared.

The open-ended parent questionnaire asked parents for their interpretation of their child's learning instead of asking for verification of the child's learning according to a specific criteria. As a result, during the content analysis the researcher found it necessary to add additional categories into the matrix based on the unique perspective of the parent as an outsider. In analyzing their responses it is evident that for some parents this was their first opportunity to discover how elementary school foreign language can be taught in a thematic unit that addresses many varied topics.

> B45: I was impressed by the variety of topics that J. learned about. Also, that J. could still recall a lot of details and information after so many months.
>
> A 27: I'm impressed with the number of words of Spanish C. has been exposed to and understands. I feel the journal idea is a good one.
>
> B50: You really covered a lot of material. A. got to know Yucatán well.
>
> B52: I was impressed with the variety of activities that were included on the pretend trip. They provided an enormous opportunity for learning. What a great avenue for learning! Thank you!

An initial look at the matrix reveals that the parents have a less detailed or a less content-focused view of the curriculum. Details recorded in the parent questionnaire matrix do not appear to the same extent that they do in the student journal matrix. This occurred in large part because parents reflected and wrote about all of their child's entries as a whole rather than on the eight selected questions used for the content analysis of

student journals. Thus, the totals frequencies of responses of the various categories on the student journal matrix are not as noteworthy.

The researcher reconfigured the categories for parent comments into broader themes. The reconfiguration makes it possible to then discuss the frequencies of parents' comments indicative of those themes. The reconfigured themes are as follows: (a) making connections to science, (b) making connections to social studies, (c) a greater awareness of cultural diversity, and (d) learning to communicate in Spanish.

Making connections to the elementary curriculum through science was observed primarily in parents' observation about the teaching of weather. A total of 85% (the most frequently mentioned curriculum connection) of the parents indicated they were impressed that their child had learned so much about the weather in Iowa and Yucatán. Making connections to the social studies curriculum was the next most frequently mentioned comment by parents. A total of 74% of the parents made various comments related to social studies concepts they observed or heard about from their child in their journal discussion.

Next in order of significance to parents is the theme of journal writing. The researcher tabulated all comments indicating the following aspects relating to journals for the Spanish class: the interaction between the Spanish teacher and their child, the artwork in the journal, and the development of their writing skills in English to discuss learning in the Spanish class. A total of 62% of the parents commented on one of these aspects of their child's learning.

Parent questionnaires reveal that 54% of the parents were impressed that their child had learned so much Spanish during their imaginary trip to Yucatán. Related to this theme, many parents indicated that they did not realize their child could learn about so many different topics while at the same time learn Spanish (33%). The national foreign sanguage standards document lists Communication as one of the five goals for students. Another goal is Cultures, but is difficult for the researcher to separate the teaching of Spanish from the teaching of the goal of Culture since they are so interconnected. Parent comments about culture centered around three themes: celebrations of Yucatán, making comparisons between cultures, and learning about foods of different cultures. About half of the parent questionnaires commented on each of these aforementioned topics as follows: 50% mentioned celebrations, 46% mentioned learning of make cultural comparisons, and 49% mentioned that their child learned about foods different from those typically eaten in Iowa.

Therefore, according to the interpretations of parents upon reading and discussing the journals with their children that are included here, the national standards of Cultures, Communications, and Connections are indeed evident in the curriculum. Although the evidence from teacher through their observations differs from that available through the parent journal reading of student journals and the student journal analysis, the ability of the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum to address the goals of the national standards is evident. In addition, the act of parents reading the student journals is valuable in itself. This reading allows for important communication—an additional goal of the National

Standards—to occur between school and home that is often lost in the busy lives of families today.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS

The National Standards in Foreign Language Learning Project (1996), promotes the goals and related standards of Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities in the teaching of foreign languages. Through this document, the foreign language profession advocates long, uninterrupted sequences of foreign language study that leads to proficiency. The consensus of the profession is that foreign language instruction should begin as early as kindergarten and continue through high school and beyond.

All classroom teachers are encouraged to implement the goals of the standards in their teaching; however, with the standards being relatively new, teachers need resources and models that will help them implement the standards. Foreign language instruction can be organized using themes from the existing school curricula. This study endeavors to examine the value of a teacher-created thematic unit, *Fiestas de Yucatán,* that emphasizes two standards-based goals—Cultures and Connections—at the elementary school level.

Assessment of the Standards in a FLEX Program Setting

The plethora of recently created elementary foreign language programs and the dissemination of the standards for foreign language learning has fomented discussion of assessment in two important areas. A review of literature has indicated that there is an urgent need for research into elementary foreign language program evaluation as to the effect that those programs have on young learners. There is also a need for research that reflects on developmentally appropriate techniques for assessing student progress.

The national survey done by Rhodes and Brannaman (1998) indicated that some assessment is being carried out in elementary foreign language programs. However, the majority of elementary foreign language programs in existence continue to be of the exploratory type (FLEX), a program design that precludes extensive assessment because of time limitation. Typically FLEX programs comprise 1-5% of the school day (Curtain & Pesola, 1994). After all, what can teacher, parents, and administrators expect from an exploratory program's limited amount of instructional time in the foreign language?

The program on which this study was based is a case in point with regard to limited instructional time and a lack of assessment. Large numbers of students (the teacher-researcher instructs 17 classes of approximately 25 students per day) with minimum instructional time (15 minutes per class) provide little opportunity to assess student progress or program effectiveness. Also unique to this program is that students spend one semester learning Spanish and the other semester learning French. Prior to this study, neither formative nor summative assessments had been attempted with the second grade students in this program in either language. The question posed by the researcher for this study asks the following: *Can dialogue journals provide documentation of student learning from a cultural unit taught in Spanish?*

Three strands of data that analyze the perspectives of students, parents, and teachers show how the goals of the national standards for foreign language learning are being met through the *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum. The limitations of the setting for this study, a program wherein students purportedly only learn "about" language and "explore" culture, and the evidence of three perspectives about this thematic unit

intensify the value of this study. The evidence of this study shows how a meaningful curriculum, with limited amounts of instructional time, can surpass the minimum goals expected of an exploratory foreign language program in an elementary school.

Teaching beginning learners in the target language contributes to effective usage of the limited instructional time characteristic of FLEX programs. The depth of learning evident in the analysis of student journals, teacher comments, and parent questionnaires throughout the relatively short time period—a total of 24 lessons of 15 minutes each or six hours total of instruction—of this unit is significant. In light of this evidence, the delivery of the curriculum (the instructional strategies used) within an exploratory program setting must not be overlooked when considering the value of this study.

Furthermore, a common misconception is that culture, in order to be comprehensible to the student, must be taught in English. As Met and Rhodes (1990) explain, "the intensity of a program is defined not only by the amount of time dedicated to it, but also by the use of language for communication and time on task" (p. 8). The depth of learning of the goal of Cultures as evidenced in this study points to the strength of the curriculum design as well as the instructional strategies used despite the fact that the learning occurred in an elementary foreign language program of an exploratory nature.

Finally, when generalizing results of this study to other research settings, several cautions must be considered. First, duplication of the research setting would be difficult. Second, while the author's teacher-researcher role makes the qualitative nature of this study appropriate, it is impossible not to discount her bias in interpreting results. Lastly,

some consideration must be given to the potential bias of the teacher focus group members in their contributions to the data. All of the teacher participants have been, and continue to be, strong supporters of elementary school foreign language education.

Evidence of Culture and Connections in the *Fiestas de Yucatán* Curriculum

Parents and teachers concur with evidence in the student journals that demonstrates learning about, and greater awareness of, Cultures. Although demographics indicate that minority populations are changing certain communities, students in Iowa have few opportunities to experience cultural diversity. Although attainment of proficiency is not the goal of the curriculum or the program, parents discussed having heard positive feedback from their children on learning a new language on their imaginary trip to Yucatán. Teachers reported that because their students imagined what Yucatán looked and felt like, they demonstrated an awareness that Yucatecans speak and live differently than do Iowans.

Teachers reported evidence of this learning through discussions that they had with students during their literature and social studies classes. Student journals gave evidence of learning about the houses, celebrations, food, weather, and geography of Yucatán. Along the way, they also made valuable comparisons about similarities and differences in products and practices of the culture of Yucatán and of Iowa.

Parents and teachers concurred with evidence from student journals that shows valuable connections to the grade level curriculum being made during their imaginary trip to Yucatán. Many parents were surprised that students learned about so many different topics in one unit. Teachers mentioned evidence of students making connections

between what they learned in Spanish class and concepts related to math, science, and social studies. Teachers who participated in the student journal project were, however, not in agreement about the efficacy of using journals as a way to connect Spanish with English writing skills. Evidence from teacher focus groups suggests that the more a teacher is aware of and involved in the Spanish program, the greater the potential for that teacher's students to make connections to other content areas through the learning of the new language.

Dialogue Journal as an Assessment Tool

Student journal evidence from this study becomes more powerful when the amount of target language used by the teacher-researcher is considered. The evidence from the journals reveals that it is possible to surpass the minimal goals of learning "about" language and "exploration" of culture considered normal in an exploratory elementary foreign language program. The student journal evidence illustrates that while teaching a thematic unit the effective use of foreign language instructional strategies appropriate for young learners, allows students to experience culture and make curricular connections. Teachers commented on these instructional strategies, and parents observed the results of these strategies through communication with their child about the Spanish journal.

A related goal of the national foreign language standards is Communities. While parents of the non-journal writing students may have had the opportunity to share in their child's Spanish class learning, the parents of the journal writing students had a unique advantage. The journal group had the visual and written documentation of student's self

reflection. Rogers (1989) would call the dialogue journal proof of the "experienced" curriculum. The experienced curriculum can be very different than the planned curriculum or the taught curriculum because each child brings to the classroom his or her unique perspective.

The benefactors of the dialogue journal home-school communication are not limited to parents and children. The teacher-researcher benefits as well. In addition to being able to provide evidence of her students' learning, the teacher-researcher's effectiveness as a curriculum planner is improved through the feedback provided by a dialogue journal. Reading and responding to the dialogue journals provides the teacher-researcher an opportunity to reflect upon and improve the planned and the taught curricula. The teacher journal documents recommended changes in the on-going planning process curriculum revision and improvement requires.

As an assessment tool, the dialogue journal is an effective alternative assessment. It serves as a direct measure of what the students are learning while encouraging them to use higher thinking skills. As it assesses the involved learner, it also instructs the learner through dialogue with the teacher who either clarified or affirmed student learning and provided an audience for the student's answers to the open-ended questions in the journal. For classroom teachers who recognize in this project a potential transfer of English writing skills, the dialogue journal has the potential for integrating well with the language arts curriculum.

For this exploratory program, a major disadvantage of the dialogue journal involves the time it takes to read and respond to the student journals. If the researcher

were to respond to students in all 17 second grade classes in which she teaches, the task would be overwhelming. The logistics of making sure even one extra minute was available after class to discuss with students their next journal writing assignment proved to be quite a challenge at times since the instructional time for each class is only 15 minutes. Occasionally it was also difficult to find time to read even one student's exemplary entry in response to the question related to the previous class period before leaving for the next class. However, given the lack of any other assessment, this project will provide invaluable evidence of this program's value in terms of student learning.

As an assessment tool for second grade students, the researcher found the dialogue journal to be developmentally appropriate. Finding a suitable assessment tool for both teacher and student in a program of limited instructional time is difficult. Since the goal of the foreign language program is not proficiency, the dialogue journal written in English is especially appropriate as a formative assessment.

Implications of Findings

The *Fiestas de Yucatán* curriculum as taught in a FLEX program setting does have value when measured according to the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996). Gaining evidence of learning in the goal areas of Cultures and Connections is possible through a thematic unit design that incorporates effective instructional strategies despite the limitations of an exploratory foreign language program.

These findings enhance the paucity of research in the profession in the following ways. First, researchers such as Donato (1998) and Shohamy (1998) discuss the

importance of multiple methods of assessing the young language learner. This research serves as a model for an alternative assessment that is developmentally appropriate for young second language learners. Second, this research serves as a method of assessing each individual child at his or her developmentally appropriate level. Third, this research demonstrates how effective home-school communication can be through the student sharing of the dialogue journal with parents and family. Fourth, this research provides a model for teaching Cultures and making Connections to the grade level curriculum through instructional delivery of a thematic unit taught in Spanish.

Future Research Needed

In retrospect, the author would, change two aspects of this research design. First, the parent questionnaires might have been more specific about their child's learning. A combination of more specific and open-ended questions might have enhanced this strand of the data. Second, for the same reason, the author might have added interviews with focus group teachers or combined focus group discussion with follow-up discussions with those teachers. A follow-up discussion to clarify points made during the focus group of participating journal teachers might have assisted the researcher in providing a richer source of data.

A review of literature revealed that very little research exists on alternative assessments for foreign language at the elementary school level. The use of dialogue journals has been researched in English as a Second Language and in regular classroom settings with various age groups. The author recommends that similar research on the

use of dialogue journals as an alternative assessment needs to be carried out in varied elementary foreign language program settings.

Additional research should be done involving more in-depth study, including analysis of the artwork of young children on dialogue journals for elementary school foreign language programs. Of particular importance to this study are the drawings that give evidence of learning culture and of making connections. While such artwork was acknowledged, no analysis was made regarding its relationship to the amount of or quality of written documentation in the student journals. Igoa's (1999) teacher-researcher work on the value of art for children in programs of English as a Second Language emphasizes the fact that art has tremendous importance for children who need other avenues for self-expression.

There are classroom teachers who model high levels of enthusiasm and willingness to integrate with the elementary foreign language teaching and those who do not. Further research might investigate the reasons why some teachers want to integrate, how they make time for such integration, and what the positive effects of such collaboration does for children's learning. Interviews as well as focus groups might assist the researcher in gathering more data on this important topic for elementary foreign language. Such research might also look into how classroom teacher attitudes affect the foreign language learning of elementary students.

Finally, as programs explore effective ways of assessing the young learner, research needs to continue investigating what type of feedback is most effective to them. This study examines one type of feedback for young learners—the teacher responses in

the dialogue journal. This study did not analyze the effect of those responses on the learner. Furthermore, do young learners benefit from the same type of feedback as adults or adolescents? Teacher action research projects might explore varied ways to give young language learners feedback on their learning and how effective that feedback is to the student.

APPENDIX A.

PARENT PERMISSION LETTER

Terrace Elementary School
Ankeny, Iowa
August 25, 1999

Dear Parents:

Throughout this semester during Spanish class we will be pretending to be on an imaginary trip to Yucatan, Mexico. On our imaginary trip we will be learning about the weather, places to visit, and celebrations that are important in Yucatan. Of course, since we will pretend to be in a Spanish-speaking country, we will learn and speak in Spanish!

Your child's teacher has agreed to allow your child to write a few sentences and/or illustrate in a journal about a topic (in English) related to their Spanish class experiences. Putting thoughts into words on paper is a very important skill to work on in second grade. Occasionally, students try to use some of the Spanish words they are learning! I respond to the students in their journals. That way we have an on-going dialogue. I have found in previous years that I love reading the journals to find out what students have learned in Spanish class.

This semester I will be doing research for my master's degree at Iowa State University. The central question of my research is as follows: *Can student dialogue journals provide documentation of student learning from a cultural unit taught in Spanish?* Throughout the semester I will be documenting their learning as evidenced in their journal entries.

In January, your child will be bringing their journal home to share it with you. You will notice that your child's journal will have a number. In my research report I will refer only to the number of the student and not his/her name in documenting learning. After you read the journal with your child, I am hoping you will return a brief response sheet (just two questions) on your perceptions of what your child learned during our imaginary trip. Please sign the attached form to indicate your approval or disapproval of your child participating in the research project. Should you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at my Terrace office (ph: 965-9670).

Sincerely,
Mrs. Jeanette Borich

****

I understand the information presented above and do _____ // do not _____

give permission for my child _____
child's name

to participate in the Spanish journal research project. I understand that the information will be kept confidential and that I can withdraw permission at any time.

_____ _____
Parent/Guardian's signature Date

Note: If Mrs. Borich does not hear from you by September 13, 1999, she will assume permission to participate the project has been granted.

APPENDIX B.

TEACHER CONSENT LETTERS

August 19, 1999

Dear Participating Dialogue Journal Teachers:

I am hoping that you are still willing to provide time for your students to journal about this semester's Spanish classes. Other participating teachers have found that it is helpful to have students write in a journal immediately after Spanish class. If that is not possible, then providing time perhaps one or two hours later as the school day schedule allows would be most advantageous for the students. I will provide the journals, and on each page there will be a topic for the students to write about or illustrate.

At the end of the semester, I will need your input and perspectives as to student learning in this project to complete my research. We will discuss a time and day in January to meet together that will work best for you. Our January meeting will last one to two hours at the most. You will find attached a copy of the parent letter that explains, in general, my research question. I will also provide you with an outline of lesson activities and goals for the students during their semester in Spanish.

Thanks for your willingness to assist me in this research project. I promise that your names will be kept confidential in reporting and documenting your perceptions of student learning. If you are interested, I would be happy to share with you the results of the research. Please sign below your consent and return to me as soon as possible. We will begin the journal writing activity when parents have given their consent. Should you have any questions, please call me at Terrace Elementary, 310 NW School Street. The phone number at Terrace is 965-9670.

Sincerely,
Jeanette Borich

I understand the scope of the research project Jeanette Borich has planned to complete with my class. I understand that she will seek parent approval of the students and need my presence at a discussion of students' learning throughout this project.

Signed_____ Date_____

Grade level/School_____

January 15, 2000

Dear 2nd Grade Teacher,

At the end of this semester, I will be complete the process of gathering information from 2nd graders (in 3 different Ankeny classes) through an on-going dialogue journal with them about their experiences during our imaginary trip to Yucatan this past semester. I am gathering this information for my research at Iowa State University. To add to the students' perspectives as seen in these journals, I need your input to verify the students' learning as evidenced in these dialogue journals.

Please consider participating in a focus group of other 2nd grade teachers to discuss what you perceive that the students have been learning this past semester. I assure you that your names will be kept confidential in reporting and documenting your perceptions of student learning. If you are interested, I would be happy to share with you the results of the research. Please sign below and return your consent. Return this to me at Terrace Elementary as soon as possible. I will verify the time and place of the focus group as soon as I have received your consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Borich

I understand the scope of the research project Jeanette Borich has planned to complete with the focus groups. I agree to participate in a discussion of students' learning to help complete the research she is doing at Iowa State University.

Signed_____ Date_____

Grade level/School_____

APPENDIX C.

STUDENT JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Journal pages highlighted in italics were the selected questions for analysis.

1--We will pretend to travel to Mexico during our Spanish classes. What does it mean to pretend? Do you have any questions about our pretend trip?

2--In Spanish class you will need to be a good detective. What does a detective do? Why do you need to do to be a good detective for Spanish class?

5--Tell about our plane trip to Yucatan. What did you do and how long was the trip?

7--*Merida is a large city and Tinum is a small town in Yucatan. What did you notice about the houses in those places?*

8—*Today you saw some pictures of Yucatan. Here is a list of the names of places we will be visiting. Can you tell something about each place?*

9--Here is a list of numbers in Spanish from 0-15. Draw or tell how to form some of the ancient Mayan numbers from Chichen Itza.

10—What happened in the story called "The Rainbow and the Birds?" In Spanish the story is called "El Arco Iris y los Pajarillos."

11—*What did you notice about the countryside in Yucatan?*

13--What do you notice about the words for months in Spanish? Can you guess how to write some of the other months we haven't learned yet? Here is a list of some Spanish months you might be able to guess: febrero, mayo, junio, agosto, noviembre, diciembre.

15--*Today we pretended to visit the countryside. What do you notice about the countryside in Yucatan? Is it the same or different from the countryside in (home state)?*

16—*Tell how Maria celebrated her birthday in Yucatan.*

17--How is a birthday in Iowa different from a birthday in Yucatan? How is it the same?

18--How is the weather in Yucatan different from Iowa? Knowing what you do about the weather in Yucatan, what clothes should your friends pack in your suitcase when they go there?

19--Describe in English or in Spanish how to write an ancient Mayan number from Chichen Itza. Here are some words you will need:

Spanish: rectangulo, circulo, uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez, once, doce, trece, catorce, quince

English: rectangle, circle, one, two, three, etc.

20--Remember that the map of Yucatan is like an upside down triangle. Can you draw a map of Yucatan and put these names on the map?

Yucatan, Tinum, Chichen Itza, Merida, el Golfo de Mexico

21—*Tell me about Ceci's first Posada party. Tell what a Posada is. Tell when a Posada is celebrated.*

22--*Tell about our Posada celebration today. What was it like? What did we do?*

22--When you think of the song De Colores, what do you see, what do you hear?

24--How are these two stories different: "the Birds and the Rainbow" and "De Colores?"

25--*Our pretend trip to Yucatan is almost over. When you really visit Yucatan, what would be your favorite month to visit? Tell why. It might help to look at your weather chart.*

26--On our pretend trip we learned lots of Spanish words for numbers, songs, weather, colors, and some months. Do you like to practice Spanish at home or with your friends? Tell why.

27--Imagine that you brought a camera on your trip. What places would your photos show? Do any of the places look the same as Iowa or do they look different?

28--*You are ready to tell your friends about your trip to Yucatan. What was the best part of your trip? Would you ever like to go back? Tell why.*

APPENDIX D.

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES: STUDENT JOURNALS

Teacher	case #	q1 Tinum: Small/diff	q1 Tinum: Stickpalm	q1 Merida/ Tinum	q1 Yucatan/ Iowa	q1 Other	q1 Sub total
A	2	0	1	0	1	0	2
A	3	1	1	0	1	0	3
A	4	0	1	1	0	0	2
A	5	0	1	0	1	0	2
A	6	1	0	0	1	0	2
A	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	8	0	0	0	1	0	1
A	9	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	10	0	0	1	0	0	1
A	11	1	1	0	0	0	2
A	12	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	16	0	1	1	0	0	2
A	17	0	0	1	0	0	1
A	18	0	1	0	1	0	2
A	19	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	20	0	0	1	1	0	2
A	21	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	25	0	0	1	1	0	2
A	26	1	0	0	0	0	1
A	27	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	29	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	30	1	1	1	0	0	3
B	32	1	1	0	0	0	2
B	33	0	0	1	0	0	1
B	34	1	0	1	0	0	2
B	35	1	1	1	0	0	3
B	36	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	39	0	0	1	0	0	1
B	40	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	41	absent	0	0	0	0	0
B	42	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	43	0	1	0	0	0	1
B	44	1	1	1	0	0	3
B	46	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	47	1	1	1	1	0	4
B	49	0	1	1	0	0	2
B	51	1	0	1	0	0	2
B	52	1	0	0	0	0	1
B	53	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total		12	26	22	9	0	69

Teacher	case #	q2 Chich: large/ ancient	q2 Gulf: ocean/flam	q2 Tinum: roofs	q2 Places: Other	q2 Subtotal
A	2	1	1	0	0	2
A	3	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	1	0	0	0	1
A	5	1	1	0	0	2
A	6	1	0	0	1	2
A	7	0	0	0	0	0
A	8	1	0	1	0	2
A	9	1	0	0	0	1
A	10	0	1	0	0	1
A	11	1	0	1	0	2
A	12	1	0	1	0	2
A	13	1	1	0	0	2
A	15	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	1	1	1	0	3
A	17	0	0	1	0	1
A	18	0	0	0	0	0
A	19	1	1	1	1	4
A	20	0	1	0	0	1
A	21	1	0	0	0	1
A	25	1	1	0	0	2
A	26	1	0	0	0	1
A	27	0	0	0	0	0
B	29	1	0	0	1	2
B	30	1	0	0	0	1
B	32	1	0	0	0	1
B	33	1	0	1	0	2
B	34	1	1	0	0	2
B	35	0	1	0	1	2
B	36	1	0	0	0	1
B	39	0	1	1	0	2
B	40	1	1	1	0	3
B	41	1	0	1	0	2
B	42	0	1	1	0	2
B	43	1	0	0	0	1
B	44	1	1	1	0	3
B	46	0	1	1	0	2
B	47	0	0	0	0	0
B	49	1	0	0	0	1
B	51	0	0	1	0	1
B	52	1	0	0	0	1
B	53	1	1	1	0	3
Total		27	16	15	4	62

Teacher	case #	q3Country 1:diftopog	q3Country 1: dif. wealth	q3Country 1:Other	Subtotal
A	2	1	1	0	2
A	3	1	0	0	1
A	4	1	1	0	2
A	5	0	0	0	0
A	6	1	0	0	1
A	7	0	0	0	0
A	8	0	1	0	1
A	9	1	1	0	2
A	10	0	1	0	1
A	11	0	1	0	1
A	12	0	1	0	1
A	13	0	1	0	1
A	15	0	0	0	0
A	16	1	0	0	1
A	17	0	1	0	1
A	18	0	0	0	0
A	19	1	1	0	2
A	20	1	1	0	2
A	21	0	1	0	1
A	25	1	0	0	1
A	26	0	1	0	1
A	27	1	1	0	2
B	29	0	0	0	0
B	30	1	1	0	2
B	32	0	1	0	1
B	33	1	0	0	1
B	34	0	0	0	0
B	35	1	1	0	2
B	36	1	1	0	2
B	39	0	0	0	0
B	40	1	1	0	2
B	41	1	0	1	2
B	42	0	0	0	0
B	43	1	1	0	2
B	44	1	1	0	2
B	46	1	1	0	2
B	47	0	0	0	0
B	49	1	1	0	2
B	51	0	1	0	1
B	52	1	0	0	1
B	53	0	1	0	1
Total		21	25	1	47

Teacher	case #	q4Country2: :tortillas	q4Country2: :growcorn	q4Country2: :Auses	q4Country2: animals	Subtotal
A	2	0	1	1	0	2
A	3	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	1	0	0	1
A	5	0	1	1	1	3
A	6	0	1	1	0	2
A	7	1	0	0	0	1
A	8	0	1	1	1	3
A	9	0	1	1	1	3
A	10	0	1	0	1	2
A	11	0	0	0	1	1
A	12	0	0	0	0	0
A	13	1	0	0	1	2
A	15	0	0	0	1	1
A	16	0	1	0	1	2
A	17	0	0	1	1	2
A	18	1	0	1	1	3
A	19	0	1	0	1	2
A	20	0	1	1	0	2
A	21	1	0	1	1	3
A	25	0	1	1	0	2
A	26	0	0	1	0	1
A	27	1	0	0	1	2
B	29	0	0	1	0	1
B	30	0	0	1	0	1
B	32	0	0	0	0	0
B	33	1	0	1	0	2
B	34	0	0	0	1	1
B	35	0	0	1	0	1
B	36	0	0	1	0	1
B	39	1	0	1	0	2
B	40	1	0	0	0	1
B	41	0	0	1	0	1
B	42	0	0	0	1	1
B	43	0	0	0	0	0
B	44	1	1	1	0	3
B	46	0	1	0	0	1
B	47	0	0	0	0	0
B	49	1	0	0	0	1
B	51	0	0	1	0	1
B	52	1	0	1	0	2
B	53	0	0	1	0	1
Total		11	13	22	15	62

Teacher	case #	q5l/y b-day : sim	q5l/Y b-daydiff	q5l/Y: Yucpinata game	q5l/Y: Other	Subtotal
A	2	1	1	1	0	3
A	3	1	0	0	0	1
A	4	1	1	1	0	3
A	5	1	1	0	0	2
A	6	1	0	0	0	1
A	7	1	0	0	0	1
A	8	0	1	0	0	1
A	9	1	0	0	0	1
A	10	1	0	0	0	1
A	11	0	1	0	0	1
A	12	1	0	1	0	2
A	13	1	0	0	0	1
A	15	1	0	0	0	1
A	16	1	0	0	1	2
A	17	0	0	1	0	1
A	18	0	0	0	0	0
A	19	1	1	1	0	3
A	20	1	1	0	0	2
A	21	0	1	1	0	2
A	25	1	1	1	0	3
A	26	1	0	0	0	1
A	27	0	1	0	0	1
B	29	1	0	0	0	1
B	30	absent	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	1	1	0	2
B	33	1	0	0	0	1
B	34	0	1	0	0	1
B	35	1	1	0	0	2
B	36	absent	0	0	0	0
B	39	0	0	0	0	0
B	40	0	0	0	0	0
B	41	1	1	0	0	2
B	42	0	1	0	0	1
B	43	0	1	0	0	1
B	44	0	1	1	0	2
B	46	0	1	1	0	2
B	47	1	0	1	0	2
B	49	absent	0	0	0	0
B	51	absent	0	0	0	0
B	52	1	1	1	0	3
B	53	0	1	1	0	2
Total		22	20	13	1	56

Teacher	case #	q6Pos:proc/ shel/xmas	q6Posada: pinataparty	q6Posada: Other	q6 subtotal
A	2	1	1	0	2
A	3	1	0	0	1
A	4	1	1	0	2
A	5	1	1	0	2
A	6	1	1	0	2
A	7	1	0	0	1
A	8	1	1	0	2
A	9	1	1	0	2
A	10	1	1	0	2
A	11	1	1	0	2
A	12	1	1	0	2
A	13	1	1	0	2
A	15	0	1	0	1
A	16	1	1	0	2
A	17	1	1	0	2
A	18	1	1	0	2
A	19	1	1	0	2
A	20	1	1	0	2
A	21	1	1	0	2
A	25	1	1	0	2
A	26	1	1	0	2
A	27	1	1	0	2
B	29	0	1	1	2
B	30	1	1	0	2
B	32	1	0	0	1
B	33	1	1	1	3
B	34	0	1	0	1
B	35	0	0	0	0
B	36	1	1	0	2
B	39	0	0	0	0
B	40	1	0	1	2
B	41	0	1	0	1
B	42	1	1	0	2
B	43	1	0	1	2
B	44	1	1	1	3
B	46	0	1	1	2
B	47	1	1	0	2
B	49	0	1	0	1
B	51	1	1	0	2
B	52	1	0	0	1
B	53	1	1	0	2
Total		33	33	6	72

Teacher	case #	q7Visit?: b-day	q7Visit? Spring	q7Visit? Winter	q7 subtotal
A	2	0	0	1	2
A	3	0	0	1	2
A	4	0	0	1	2
A	5	0	1	0	1
A	6	0	0	1	1
A	7	0	1	0	2
A	8	0	0	1	1
A	9	0	1	0	1
A	10	0	0	1	2
A	11	1	0	0	2
A	12	0	1	0	2
A	13	absent	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0
A	16	1	1	1	4
A	17	0	1	0	2
A	18	0	0	1	2
A	19	0	0	1	2
A	20	0	1	0	2
A	21	0	1	1	3
A	25	0	0	0	1
A	26	0	1	0	2
A	27	0	0	1	1
B	29	0	1	0	2
B	30	1	1	0	3
B	32	0	0	1	2
B	33	0	0	1	2
B	34	0	0	1	2
B	35	1	1	0	3
B	36	absent	0	0	0
B	39	1	1	0	2
B	40	0	1	1	3
B	41	0	1	0	2
B	42	0	0	0	1
B	43	0	1	1	3
B	44	0	1	0	2
B	46	0	0	1	2
B	47	0	1	0	2
B	49	0	0	0	0
B	51	0	1	0	2
B	52	1	0	0	2
B	53	1	1	0	2
Total		**7**	**20**	**17**	**74**

Teacher	case #	q8Back? yes weather	q8Back? no too hot	q8Back? good compare	q8 subtotal
A	2		0	1	1
A	3		0	0	0
A	4		0	1	1
A	5		0	1	1
A	6		0	0	1
A	7		1	0	1
A	8		0	0	1
A	9		1	0	1
A	10		0	1	1
A	11		0	1	1
A	12		0	1	1
A	13		0	0	1
A	15		1	0	1
A	16		0	1	1
A	17		1	0	1
A	18		0	0	1
A	19		0	0	1
A	20		0	0	1
A	21		0	1	1
A	25		1	0	0
A	26		1	0	0
A	27	absent		0	0
B	29		0	0	1
B	30		1	0	0
B	32	absent		0	0
B	33		1	0	1
B	34	absent		0	0
B	35		0	0	1
B	36		0	0	1
B	39	absent		0	0
B	40		1	0	0
B	41	absent		0	0
B	42		0	0	1
B	43		0	0	1
B	44		0	0	1
B	46		0	0	1
B	47		0	0	1
B	49		0	1	0
B	51		0	0	1
B	52		1	0	1
B	53		1	0	1
Total			11	6	19

Teacher	case #	TOTAL
A	2	17
A	3	9
A	4	14
A	5	13
A	6	12
A	7	6
A	8	12
A	9	12
A	10	11
A	11	12
A	12	11
A	13	9
A	15	5
A	16	17
A	17	11
A	18	11
A	19	17
A	20	14
A	21	15
A	25	14
A	26	11
A	27	10
B	29	12
B	30	13
B	32	9
B	33	14
B	34	9
B	35	14
B	36	10
B	39	7
B	40	14
B	41	10
B	42	10
B	43	11
B	44	19
B	46	14
B	47	11
B	49	8
B	51	10
B	52	13
B	53	15
Total		**486**

APPENDIX E. SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES

TEACHER FOCUS GROUPS

Teacher Focus Group Summary

Teacher	CO count	CO lit	CO Weath	CO Math	CO Maps	CO Mayan	CO Mus/ Art	CO Soc St	CU Tort	CU lang	CU div award	CU celeb	other	pos dial	neg journ
1d	0	1	0	2	1	2	1	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	3
1l	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
1n	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
1m	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	0	1
1j	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	2
2O	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
2k	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
2c	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	0	0	0
2S	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
2K	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2J	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
TOT	4	7	4	3	3	3	3	7	5	14	8	5	0	2	8

Teacher	neg witch lang time	other.	neg inte	neg sp lang	pos inte	pos art	TOTAL
1D	1	1	2	0	5	1	25
1L	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
1N	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
1M	1	0	5	1	1	0	16
1J	2	0	0	2	1	0	16
JO	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
2K	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
2C	1	0	0	0	0	0	10
2S	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
2K	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
2J	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
TOT	6	1	7	3	7	2	102

APPENDIX F. PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parents:

Your child's classroom teacher has allowed your student to write a journal about their Spanish class this year. Putting thoughts into words on paper is a very important skill to work on in second grade. I love reading the journals to find out what your student feels he/she has learned in Spanish class. I respond to the students in their journals. Sometimes, the students try to use some of the Spanish words they are learning.

Throughout this semester, during Spanish class we have been pretending to be on an imaginary trip to Yucatan, Mexico. Please read the journals with your child to find out more about their pretend trip and the Spanish they are learning. It is also very exciting to see how the students are progressing with their writing skills. If this letter is returned by _____ with some comments (below) from you, I have promised the students a Spanish surprise. Should you have any questions, please call me at Terrace Elementary (ph: 965-9670).

Sincerely,
Mrs. Jeanette Borich

What impressed you most about your child's Spanish journal?

What aspects of learning about Mexican culture seemed to impress your child during the pretend trip?

What aspects of learning about Yucatán's weather, places, food, language, and numbers seemed to impress your child during this pretend trip?

APPENDIX G.

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES: PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Teacher	case #	*q1 Tinum Small/dij*	*q1 Tinum: Stick palm*	*q1Merida/ Tinum casa*	*q1 Yucatan/ Iowa*	*q1 Other*	*q2:Chich :large/ ancient*	*q2 Gulf: ocean/ flam*
A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	5	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
A	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
A	8	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
A	9	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
A	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	11	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
A	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	17	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
A	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	20	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
A	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	29	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	33	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
B	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
B	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	36	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
B	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	38	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	43	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	45	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
B	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	47	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
B	49	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
B	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	51	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	52	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	53	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
TOTAL		0	1	13	2	0	11	6

Teacher	case #	*q2 Places :Other*	*q3Country1:d iftopog*	*q3Country1 :difweath*	*q3 Country1 : Other*	*q4Country2 : tortillas*	*q4 Country2 grow corn*	*q4Country2 : Auses*
A	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
A	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
A	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	9	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
A	10	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
A	11	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
A	12	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
A	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
A	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	18	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
A	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	25	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
A	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	29	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
B	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	41	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
B	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	43	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
B	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	45	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
B	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	47	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
B	49	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	51	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	53	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		1	5	6	0	7	3	3

Teacher	case #	q4 Country2: anima	q4 Country2: Other	q5 l/y bday:sim	q5 l/Yb-daydiff	q5l/Y: Yucpin game	q5 l/Y: Other	q6Pos: proc/ shel/ xmas
A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
A	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
A	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
A	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	10	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
A	11	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
A	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
A	17	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
A	18	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	25	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
A	26	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
A	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	29	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
B	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	34	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	38	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	40	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	41	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	51	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	52	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	53	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL		1	0	1	8	11	0	7

Teacher	case #	q6Posad: pinatapan	q6 Posada: Other	q7 Visit?:b-day	q7Visit? Spring	q7Visit? Winter	q7Visit? compare emp	q7Visit? Other
A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	10	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
A	11	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
A	12	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	13	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
A	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
A	17	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	20	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	26	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
A	27	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	29	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	34	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
B	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	36	0	0	0	1	1	1	0
B	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	38	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
B	39	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	40	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	41	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
B	42	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	43	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	45	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	46	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	47	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	51	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	52	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	53	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL		3	1	0	2	4	28	1

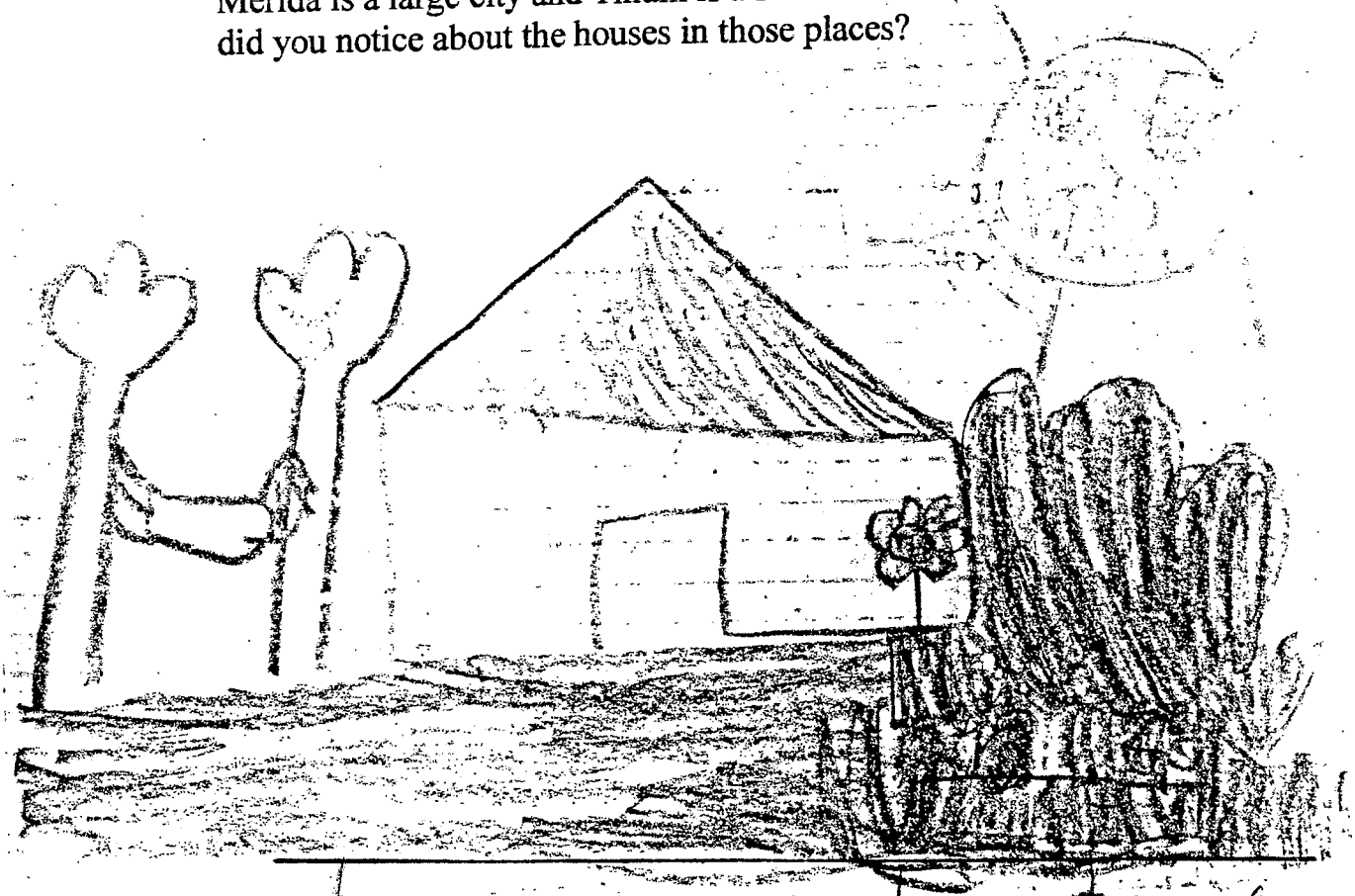
Teacher	case #	*q8Back? Yes weather*	*q8Back? no too At*	*q8Back?good compare cult*	*q8Back? Other*	*q9 mayan #s*	*learn/ Spanish*	*develop writesk*
A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
A	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
A	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	9	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
A	10	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	11	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	12	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
A	13	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
A	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
A	17	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
A	18	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
A	19	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
A	20	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
A	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	25	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
A	26	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
A	27	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
B	29	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
B	30	0	0	1	0	1	1	1
B	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
B	33	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
B	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	35	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
B	36	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
B	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	38	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
B	39	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
B	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	41	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
B	42	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	43	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
B	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	45	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	46	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
B	47	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	49	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	51	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	53	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
TOTAL		7	3	18	1	10	20	13

Teacher	case #	*food unique*	*imagine/ creative*	*drawing/ art*	*many topics*	*Other*	*Interact journ*	**TOTAL**
A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
A	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
A	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
A	5	1	0	0	1	0	0	9
A	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
A	7	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
A	8	1	1	0	1	0	0	6
A	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	7
A	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
A	11	0	0	0	1	0	0	11
A	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
A	13	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
A	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	16	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
A	17	1	1	1	1	0	0	9
A	18	0	1	1	1	0	0	9
A	19	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
A	20	1	1	1	0	0	0	8
A	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	25	1	0	1	0	0	0	9
A	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
A	27	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
B	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
B	30	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
B	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	32	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
B	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
B	34	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
B	35	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
B	36	0	0	1	0	0	1	11
B	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	38	1	0	0	1	1	1	11
B	39	1	0	0	1	0	0	7
B	40	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
B	41	0	1	1	0	0	1	10
B	42	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
B	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
B	44	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	45	0	0	0	1	0	1	8
B	46	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
B	47	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
B	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
B	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	51	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
B	52	1	0	1	0	1	0	6
B	53	0	1	0	1	1	1	11
TOTAL		13	10	11	13	3	8	255

APPENDIX H. EXAMPLE STUDENT JOURNAL ENTRIES

Question 1: Student 11 Journal Entry

Merida is a large city and Tinum is a small town in Yucatan. What did you notice about the houses in those places?

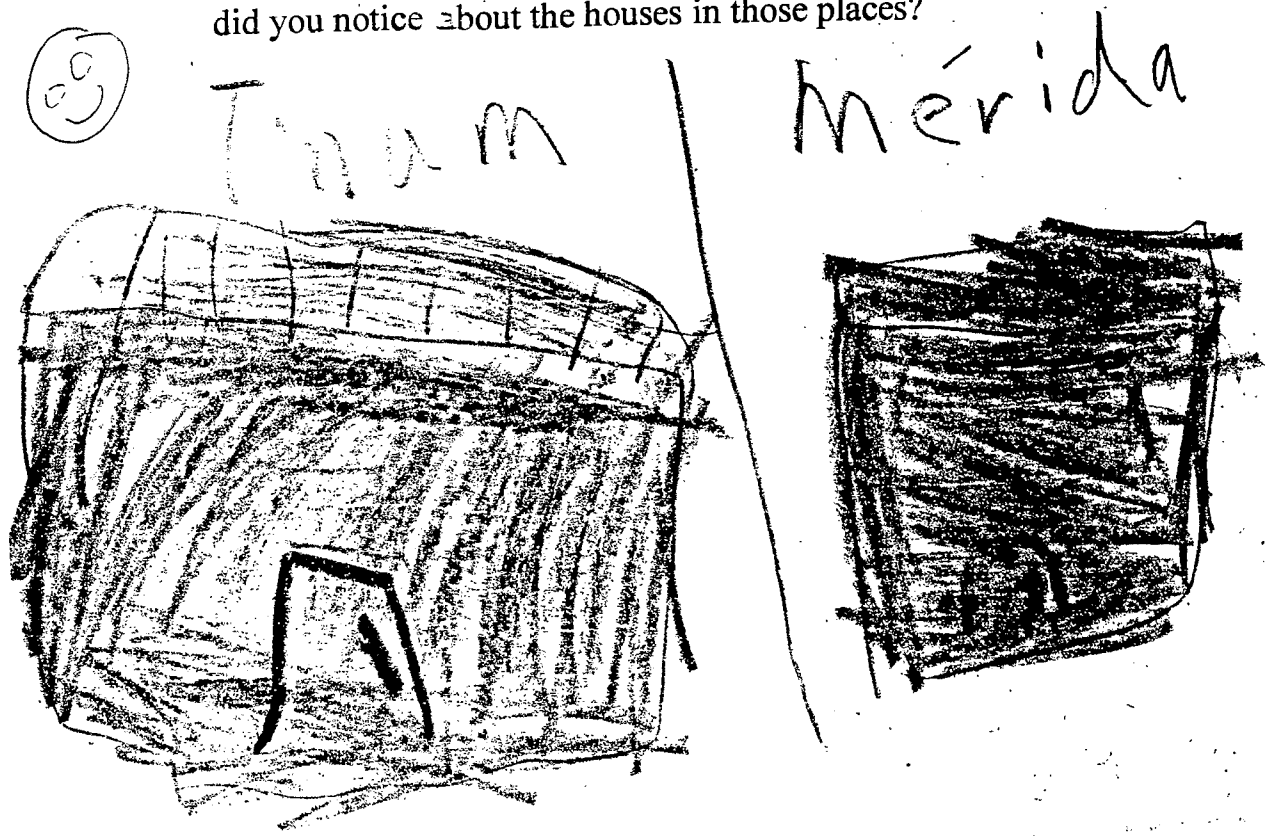


I see there is a hammock in your picture.

tary ur made of ov
lives. it was hot!
the tapter was
90. tary war sort.
Hoses.

Question 1: Student 44 Journal Entry

Merida is a large city and Tinum is a small town in Yucatan. What did you notice about the houses in those places?



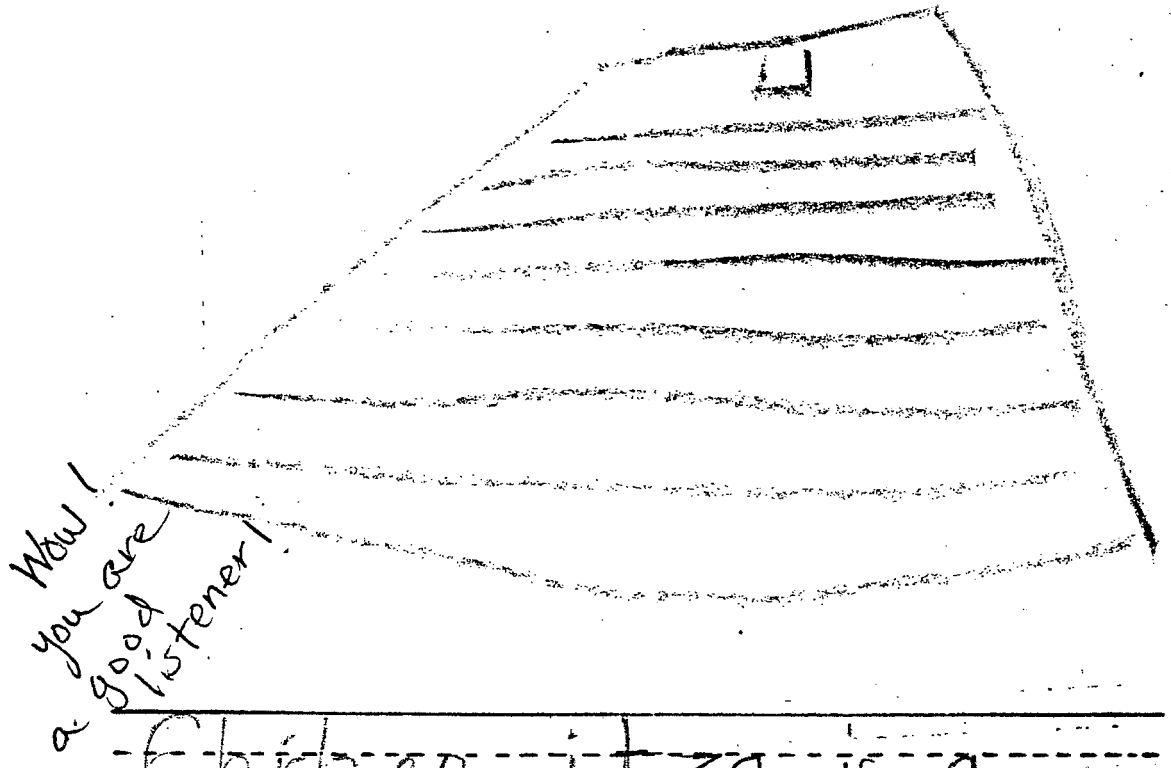
In Tinum the Rafs were mad from pontree In Merida the rafs were flat.

Yes! You are right. Good Listener!

Question 2: Student 40 Journal Entry

Here are some names of places in Yucatan that we are visiting. Can you tell something about each place?

Chichen Itza, Merida, Tinum, el Golfo de Mexico



Wow! You are a good listener!

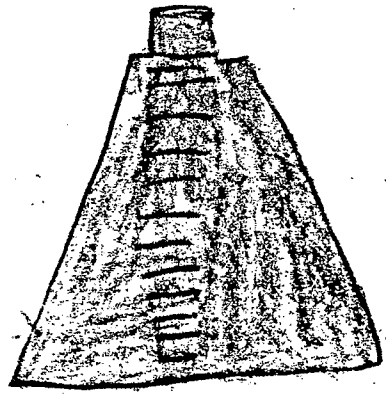
Chichen itza is a tall bilding it has over 100 steps. El golfo de mexico is a big sea.

Tinum is the plase that has pom tree tevs for a rouv.

Question 2: Student 5 Journal Entry

Here are some names of places in Yucatan that we are visiting. Can you tell something about each place?

Chichen Itza, Merida, Tinum, el Golfo de Mexico

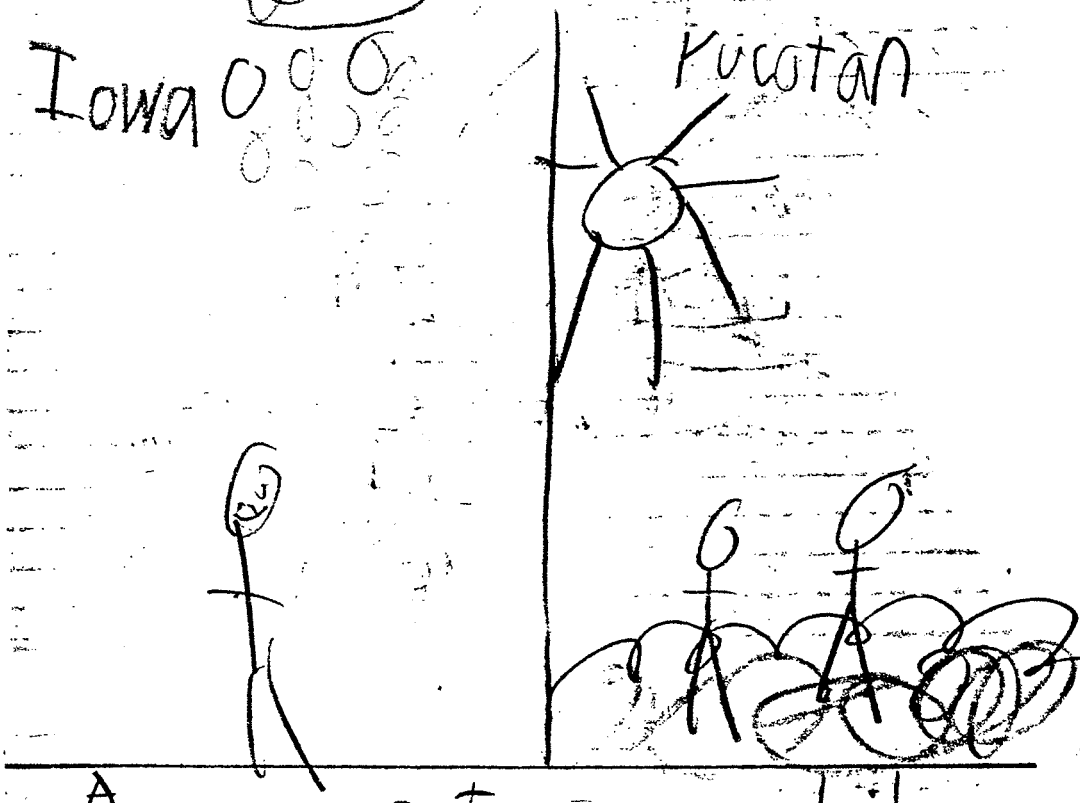


You are right.

Chichen itza is a pyramid
flamingos live in the
Golfo de Mexico

Question 3: Student 4 Journal Entry

Today we pretended to visit the countryside. What do you notice about the countryside in Yucatan? Is it the same or different from the countryside in (home state)?

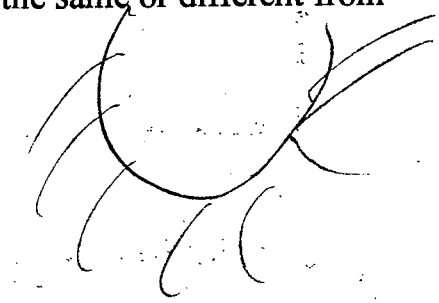


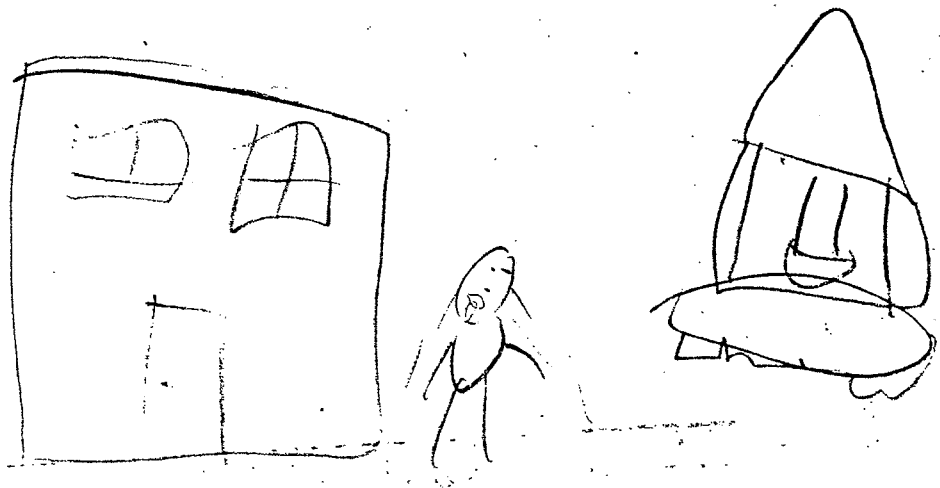
Are sate was hiee and Yucatan's was samitho In Iowa the wather was farsw. In Yukatn the waher was cator

Yes, you are right! Great Listener!

Question 3: Student 49 Journal Entry

Today we pretended to visit the countryside. What do you notice about the countryside in Yucatan? Is it the same or different from the countryside in (home state)?



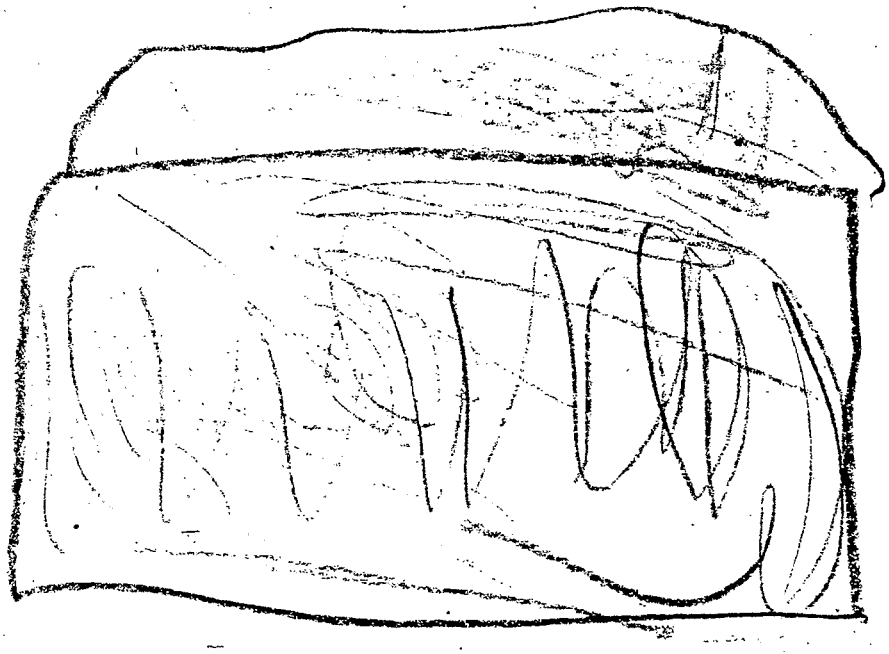


In Yucatan it is hot. It is hot pole (oak) a lot of water. It is flat in Yucatan.

Yes the countryside looks very different

Question 4: Student 8 Journal Entry

Tell about our pretend visit to the countryside in Yucatan. What did you see and do in Spanish class today?



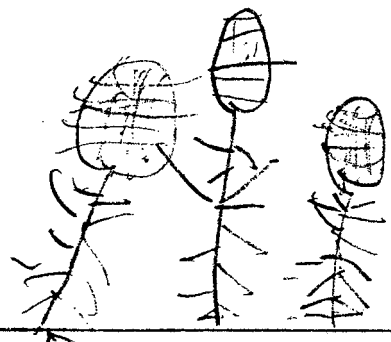
I saw cone, and I saw a different house then Iowa and I saw a got a Dog.

Tinum is very different from Merida

Question 4: Student 46 Journal Entry

Tell about our pretend visit to the countryside in Yucatan. What did you see and do in Spanish class today?

Iowa Yucatan

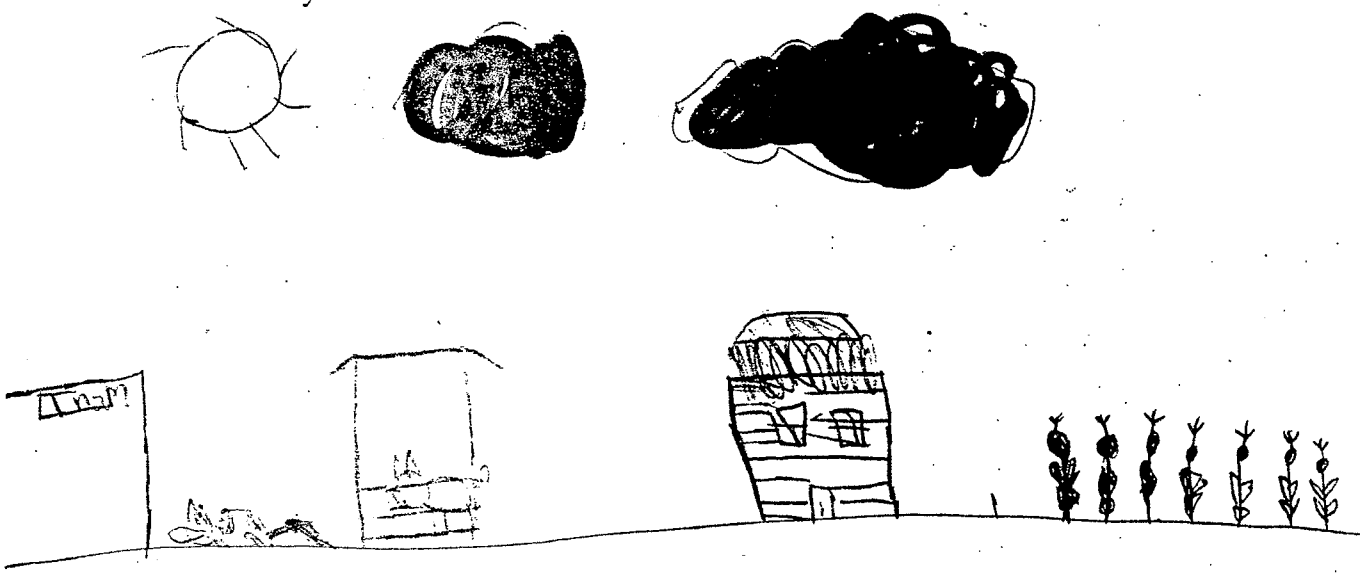


Papa grow corn in Yucatan.
People grow corn in Iowa too. Y

yes!
What to they make with the corn in the Yucatán?

Question 4: Student 9 Journal Entry

Tell about our pretend visit to the countryside in Yucatan. What did you see and do in Spanish class today?



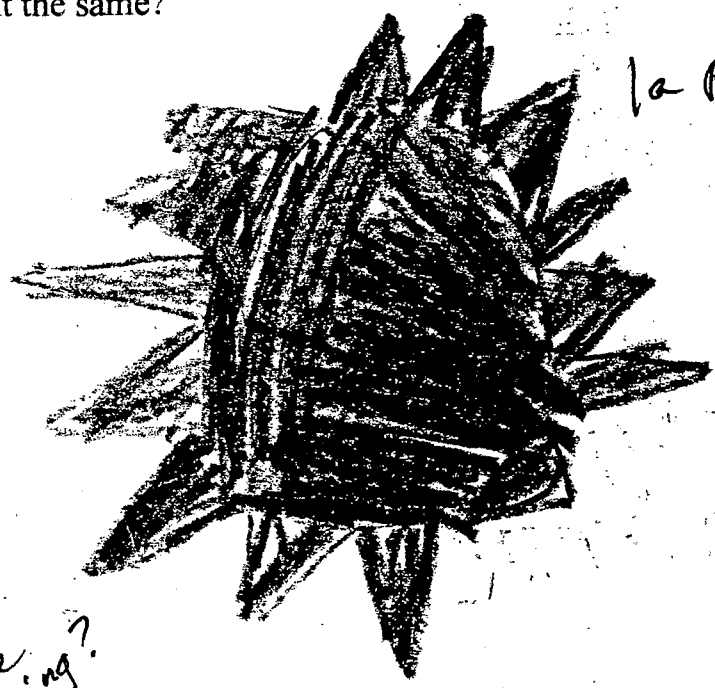
We saw a bach of car an we saw a lat of Hoses. an we saw a bach of Anamals.

Bien

03

Question 5: Student 12 Journal Entry

How is a birthday in Iowa different from a birthday in Yucatan? How is it the same?

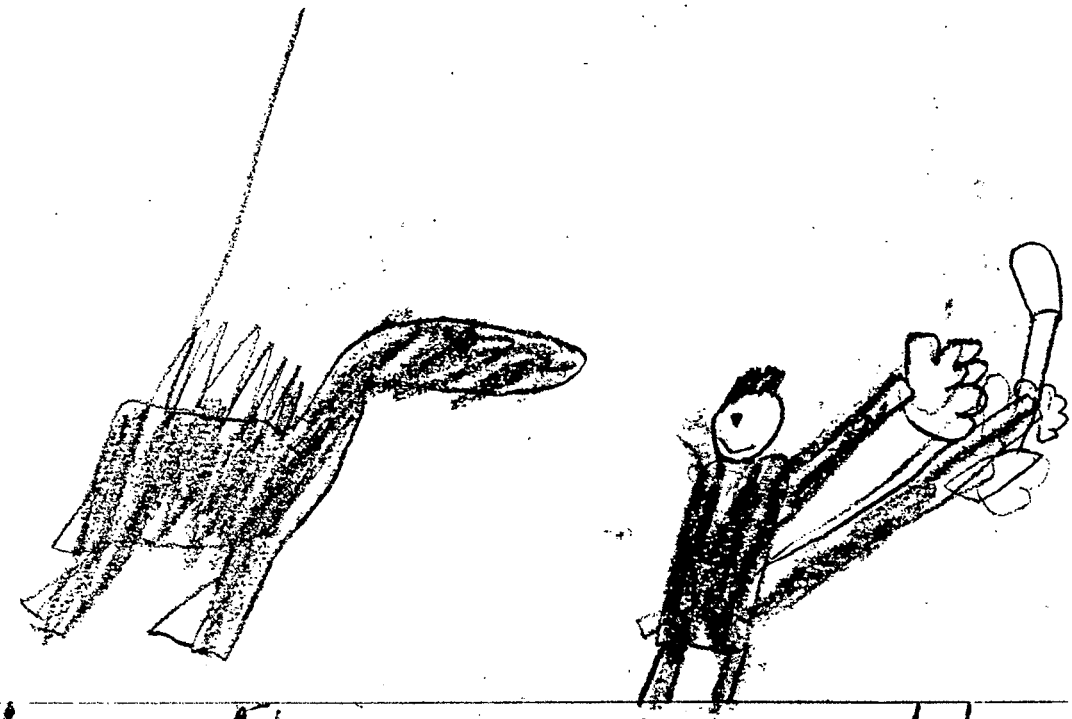


What did maria's family do in the morning?

They both have Birthday braes. They both have cakes. They both sing in youctian they thR binyt is a game in Iowa it a fun game.

Question 5: Student 34 Journal Entry

How is a birthday in Iowa different from a birthday in Yucatan? How is it the same?

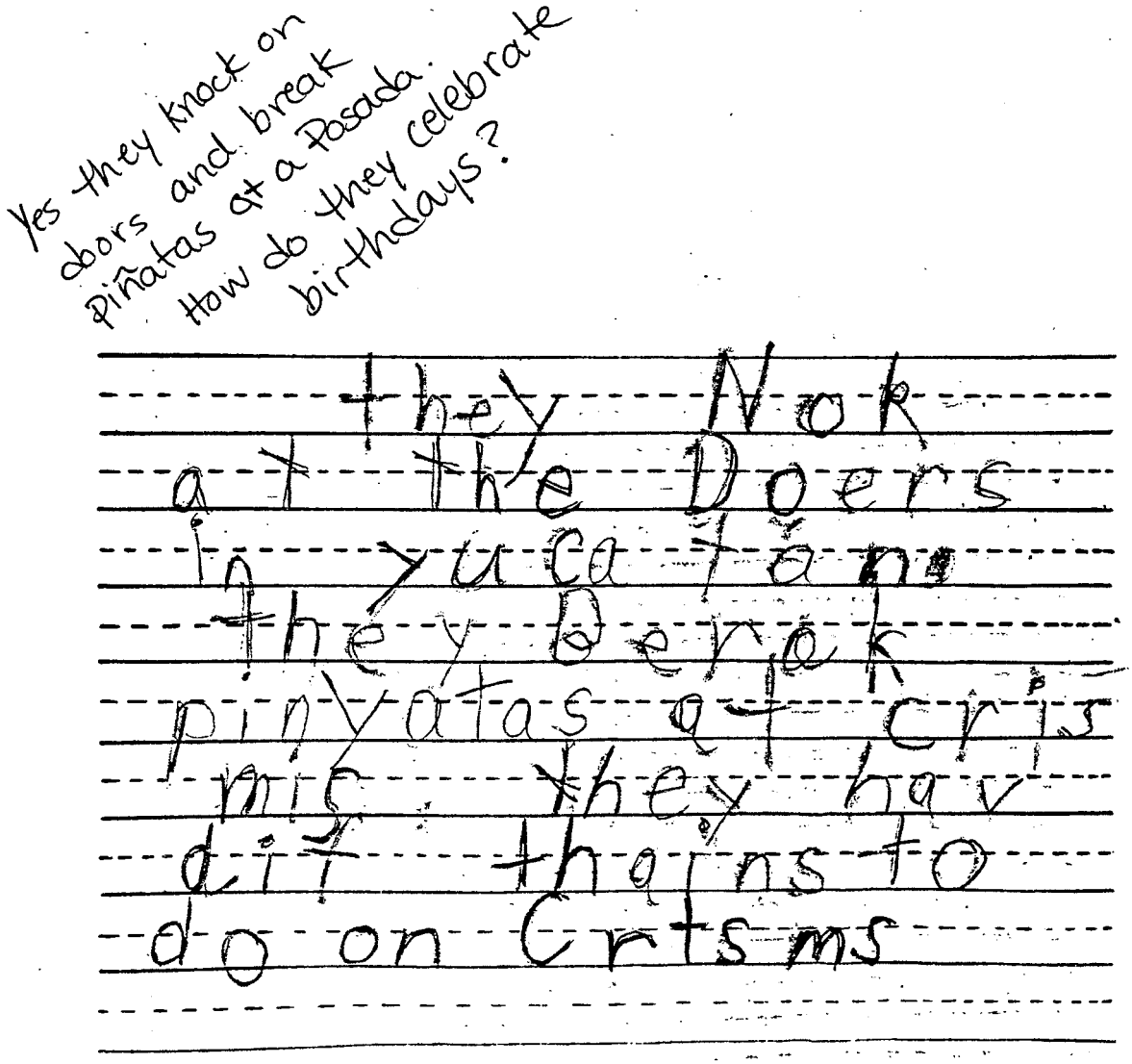


Today in amerika they don't youculee youes pinyotes in yuackatan youes is pinyoteas.

You are right, Cody. Usually in Iowa we don't break piñatas at birthdays.

Question 6: Student 39 Journal Entry

Tell how the birthday celebration and the Posada celebration are different in Yucatán.



Question 6: Student 13 Journal Entry

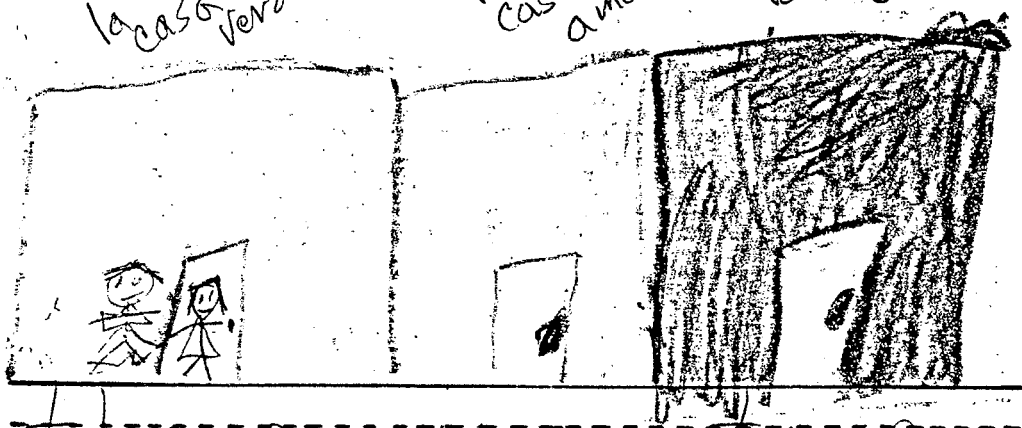
Tell me about Ceci's first Posada party. Tell what a Posada is. Tell when a Posada is celebrated.

Yes! It is celebrated in December A posada has a piñata but is not a birthday

its sa ja brad is on crissmis and its sa ja brad on br Thas at.

Question 6: Student 2 Journal Entry

What's a Posada party?



Wow! You wrote a great description

there was two perate and they were looking for a place to stay so they went to two houses and the thierd one they went to was the one with the pinyata and the fiesta.

Question 7: Student 16 Journal Entry

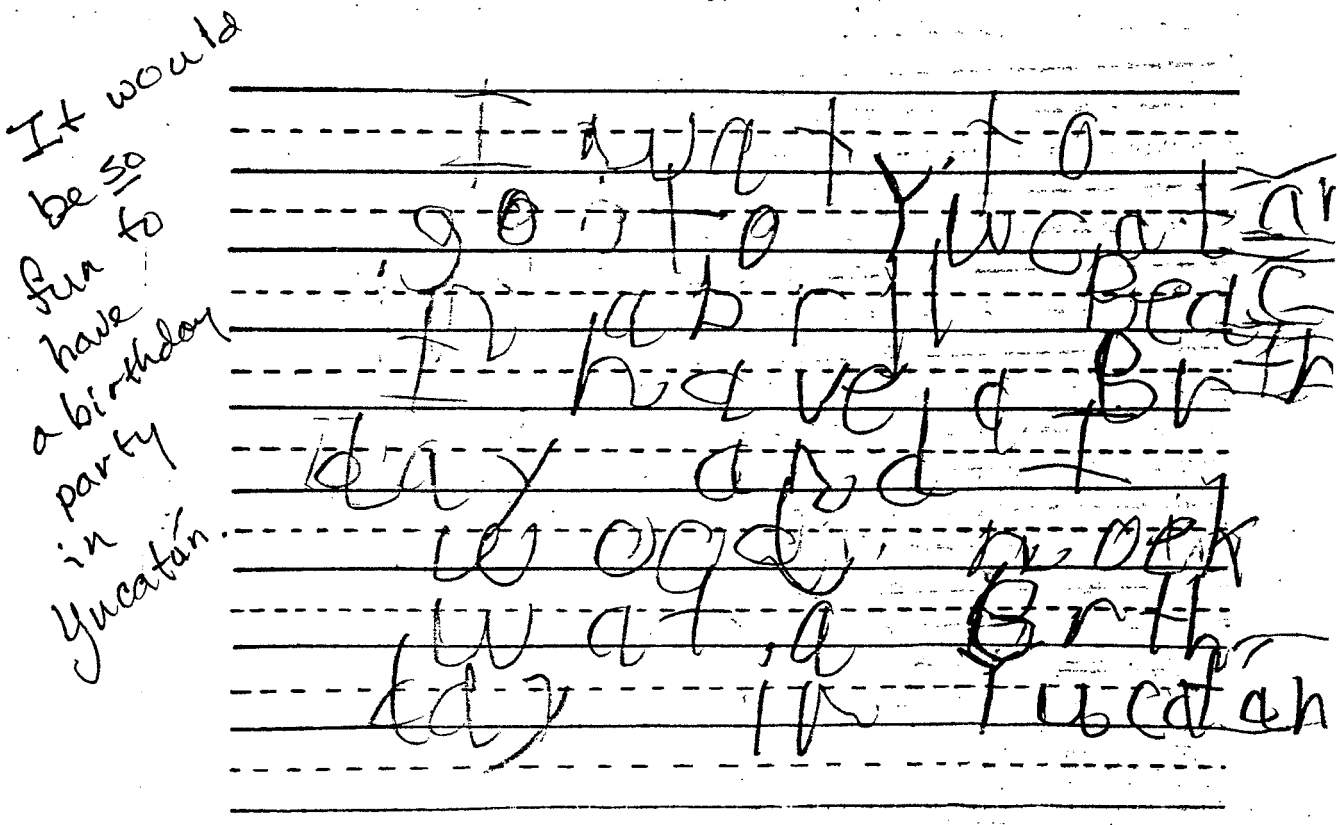
Our pretend trip to Yucatan is almost over. When you really visit Yucatan, what would be your favorite month to visit? Tell why. It might help to look at your weather chart.

Noviembre, because it's my birthday and it's mucho calor.

In November I think is warm but not too warm

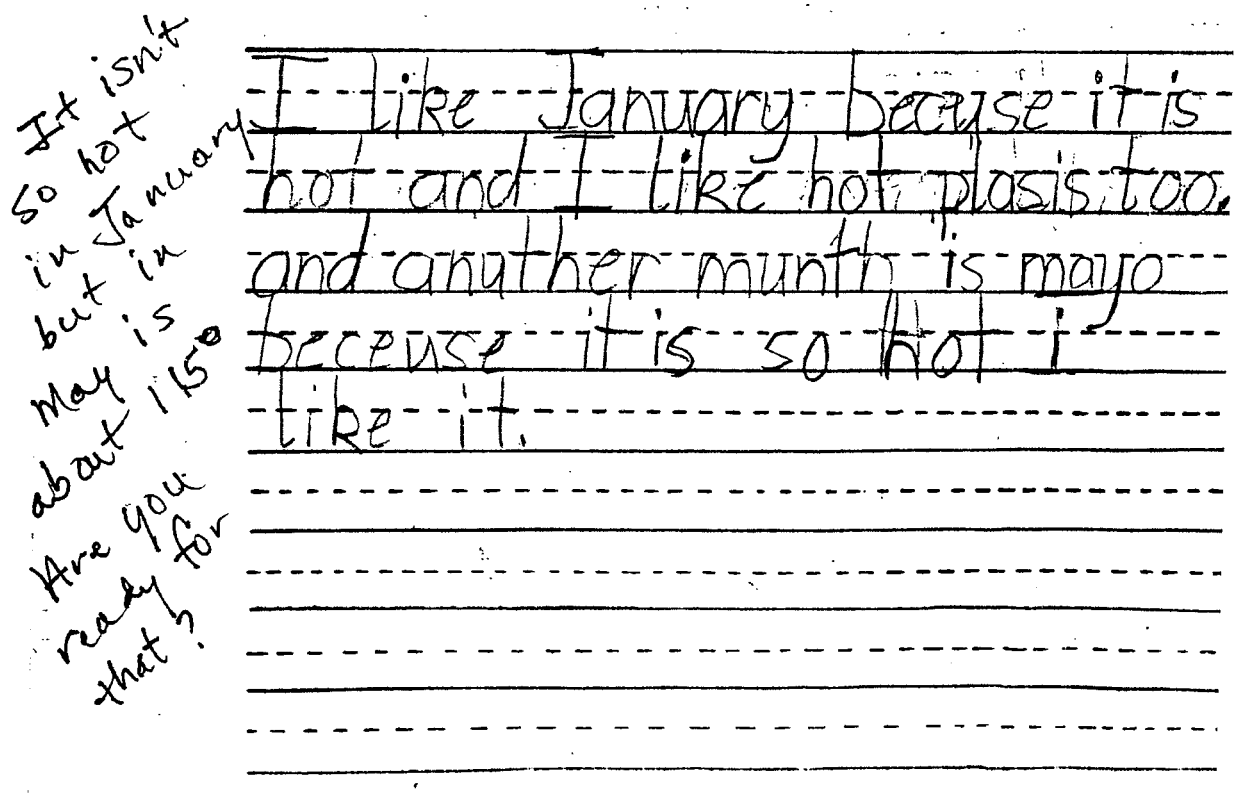
Question 7: Student 39 Journal Entry

Our pretend trip to Yucatan is almost over. When you really visit Yucatan, what would be your favorite month to visit? Tell why. It might help to look at your weather chart.



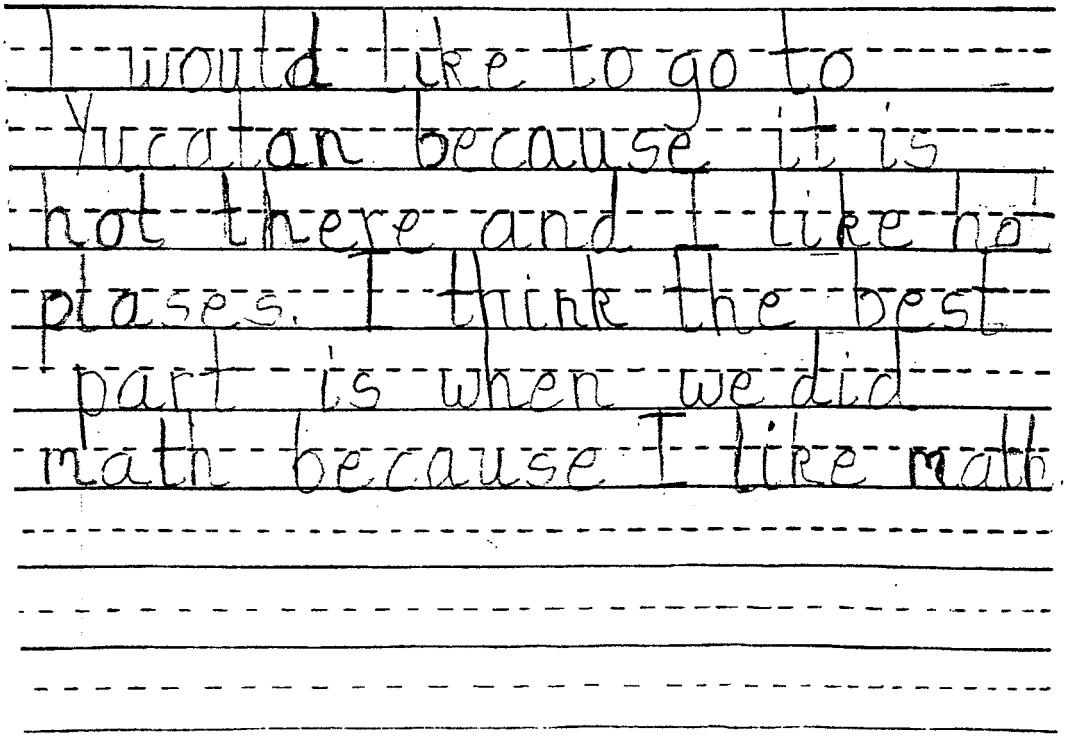
Question 7: Student 43 Journal Entry

Our pretend trip to Yucatan is almost over. When you really visit Yucatan, what would be your favorite month to visit? Tell why. It might help to look at your weather chart.



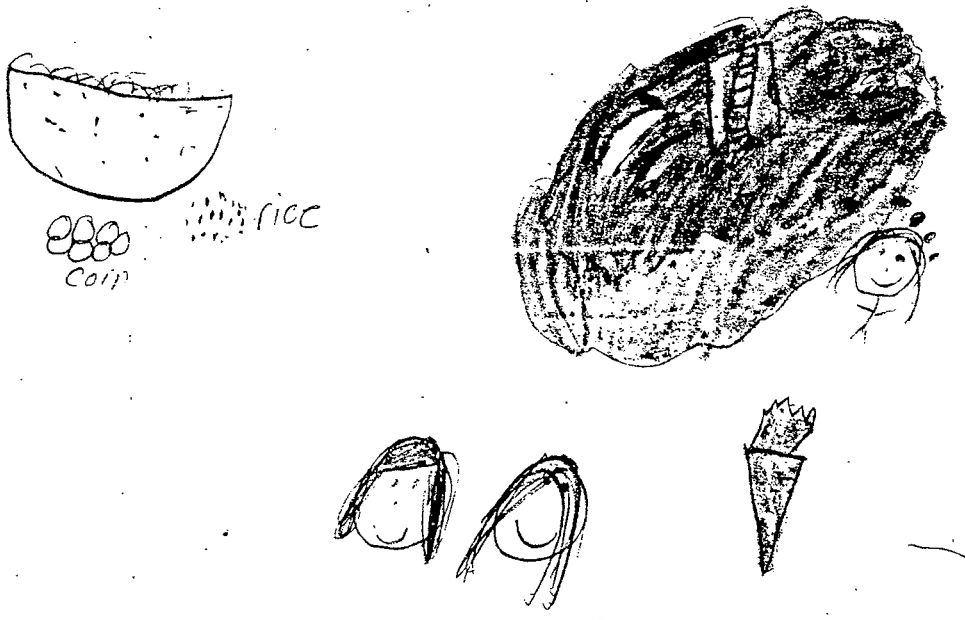
Question 8: Student 33 Journal Entry

You are ready to tell your friends about your trip to Yucatan. What was the best part of your trip? Would you ever like to gc back? Tell why.



Question 8: Student 21 Journal Entry

You are ready to tell your friends about your trip to Yucatan. What was the best part of your trip? Would you ever like to go back? Tell why.



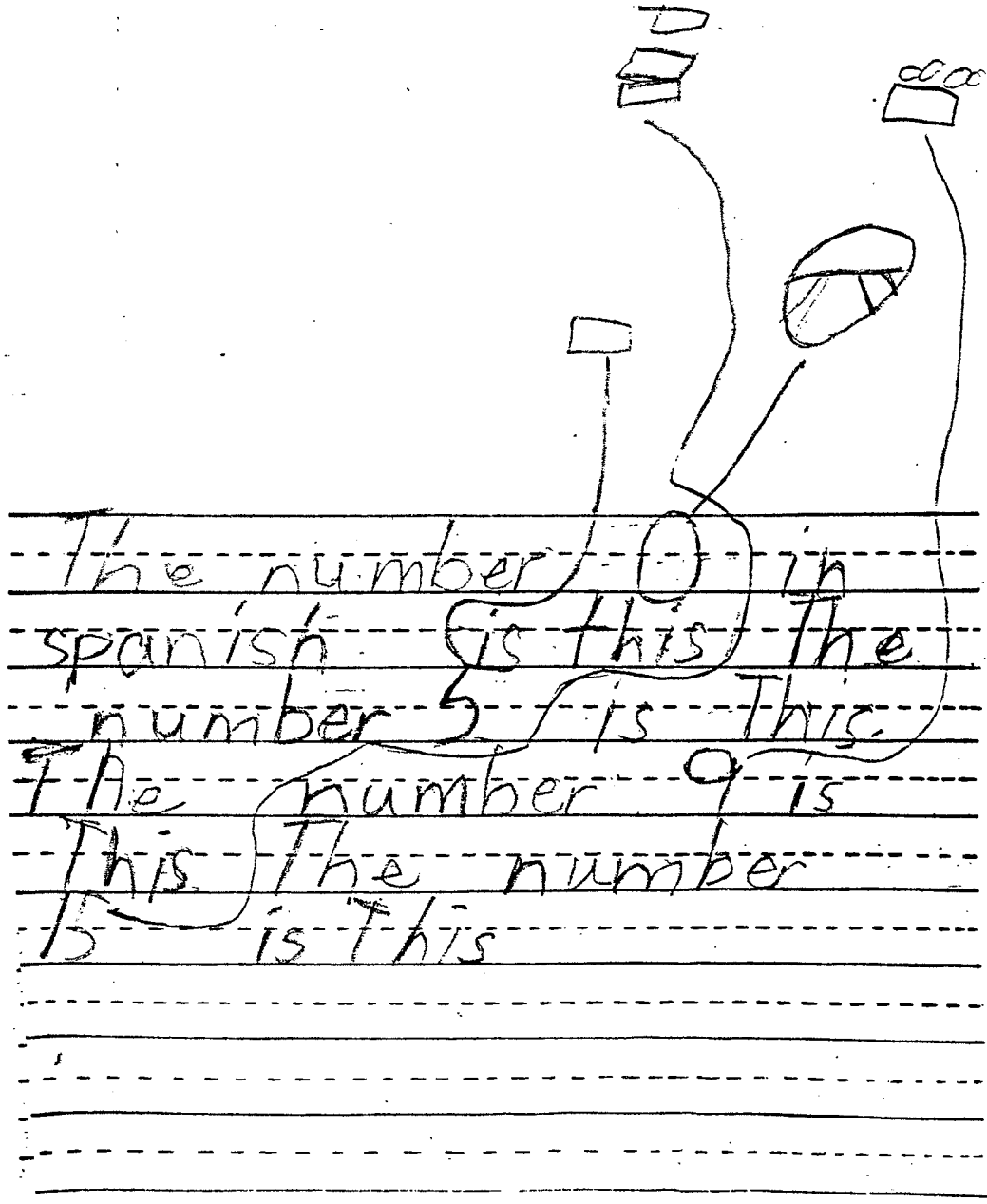
Yes I would like to go back
becas it it mowchese mowclour.
The best part was the food.
I will show you wate
they look like. P.S.
I like you. do carts
geroo in Yucaton?

P.P.s. Did you now that corn is the top food in Mexo

Question 9: Student 29 Journal Entry

Here is a list of numbers in Spanish from 0-15. Draw or tell how to form some of the ancient Mayan numbers from Chichen Itza.

cero, uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez, once, doce, trece, catorce, quince



Question 9: Student 9 Journal Entry

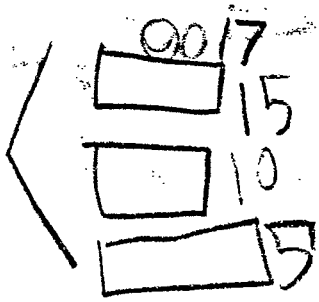
Here is a story problem in Spanish. Can you make up your own story problem?

seis personas en Tinum
ocho personas en Merida

Las personas visitan el Golfo de Mexico. Cuantas personas visitan en total ?

35 personas en el Golfo de Mexico

That's diez y siete



doce = 12
catorce = 14
Is that right 26 ?

Jereny has dase panse an I hare cato an Hare mak if 11

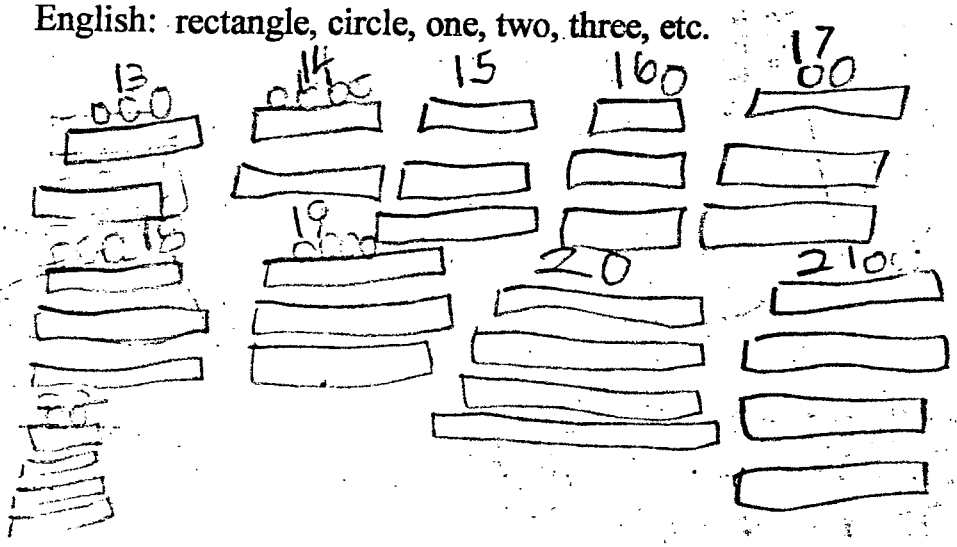
or
2
+14
16 ?

Question 9: Student 33 Journal Entry

Describe in English or in Spanish how to write an ancient number from Chichen Itza. Here are some words you will need:

Spanish: rectangulo, circulo, uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez, once, doce, trece, catorce, quince

English: rectangle, circle, one, two, three, etc.



Great Examples!

In Spanish we learned chichenitz nubers and she put us in grops of four and we had to think about ha to make chichen Itza nubers

Do you like to work in groups?

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